Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan

2013/14 – 2016/17

January 2017

The Commonwealth

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Acknowledgements

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Acronyms

ARR	Annual Results Reports
ARTEMIS	Activity Results Tracking and Expenditure Management System
BRICS	Major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
BTOR	Back-to-Office Report
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCASS	Computerised Case Administration System
CCP	Commonwealth Connects Programme
CFTC	Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation
CFNHRI	Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CIDT	Centre for International Development and Training
CMAG	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group
CMDF	Commonwealth Media Development Fund
COG	Commonwealth Observer Group
COMM	Communications Division
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CSD	Corporate Services Division
CS-DRMS	Commonwealth Secretariat's Debt Recording and Management System
CYP	Commonwealth Youth Programme (fund)
DFAT	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DMU	Debt Management Unit (of Seychelles)
DSG	Deputy Secretary-General
EC	European Commission
EPD	Economic Policy Division
EPG	Eminent Persons Group
EU	European Union
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FMIS	Finance and Management Information Section
FGD	focus group discussion
G20	Group of Twenty (international forum)
GDP	gross domestic product
HEU	Health and Education Unit
HQ	Headquarters
HR	human resources
HRD	Human Resources Division
HRC	Human Rights Commission
HRU	Human Rights Unit
ICT	information and communication technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IO	Intermediate Outcome
IT	information technology

KPI	key performance indicator
LTE	long-term expert
MAR	Multilateral Aid Review
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MDR	Multilateral Development Review
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
ME&R	monitoring, evaluation and reporting
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NZ	New Zealand
OCTA	Office of the Chief Trade Adviser (Vanuatu)
OIF	Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie
ONR	Oceans and Natural Resources Division
OSG	Office of the Secretary-General
PACER-Plus	Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations
PDD	Project Design Document
PMIS	Programme Management Information System
PCP	Primary Contact Point
POL	Political Affairs Division
PMRU	Project Management and Referral Unit
PRS	Performance Rating System
PSGU	Public Sector Governance Unit
RBM	results-based management
ROL	Rule of Law Division
Secretariat	Commonwealth Secretariat
SADC	South African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	small island developing states
SMART	specific, measurable, achievable, relevant (or realistic), time-bound (results or indicators)
SMG	Senior Management Group
SO	Strategic Outcome
SP	Strategic Plan
SPED	Strategic Planning and Evaluation Division
SRF	Strategic Results Framework
SSI	semi-structured interviews
SWOT	strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats analysis
TAU	Technical Assistance Unit
ToR	Terms of Reference
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UVP	unique value proposition
WTO	World Trade Organization
YTH	Youth Division

Executive Summary

Overview

1. The Commonwealth Secretariat commissioned the Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT) of the University of Wolverhampton to evaluate the Secretariat's Strategic Plan (SP) for 2013/14 to 2016/17. This independent evaluation assessed internal processes used to develop the SP and align the organisational structure, the effectiveness of operational tools and systems in facilitating SP delivery, relevance of the SP to Commonwealth member countries' needs, and benefits and results of the Secretariat's key projects during the four-year SP implementation period.

2. Evaluation methodology included: extensive document review; interviews with staff and member country stakeholders; field visits to Seychelles (Africa) and Vanuatu (Pacific); and an in-depth review of a representative sample of eight (8) projects. One hundred and nine (109) respondents were engaged via 73 semi-structured interviews (SSIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs).

3. The evaluation took place during a challenging period at the Secretariat, when the new Secretary-General was introducing reforms and development of a new SP was called for earlier than had been anticipated. This fast-changing context hindered access to certain respondent groups. Key limitations included: a low response rate for virtual interviews with member country stakeholders; inability to interview UK-based High Commissioners and Regional Deans (Board members); the low number of field visits; and selection of two small states as the countries for field visits.

Main findings

Strategic Plan (SP) development/consultation process

4. The SP took two years to develop and obtain approval from the Board, and the previous strategic plan was extended for one year to allow for this extended development period.

The final version represents a compromise resulting from highly political and quite challenging negotiations, centred on finding the right balance between political/democracy work and development work.

5. SP consultations with staff took place primarily at a high-level, both within the organisations and with political representatives of the member countries. Respondents found that those involved in delivery – technical staff and member country line ministries – did not have adequate opportunity to input; nor did Commonwealth organisations.

6. The SP development process lacked a clear system for portfolio prioritisation, with budgeting conducted by Directors/Heads post-design and not as an integral part of the process. A lack of standardised approach resulted in Intermediate Outcomes of very different size and scope.

Logic, alignment and coherence of the Strategic Plan design

7. The 2013 SP exercise represented the first deliberate effort towards a results-based management (RBM)-orientated implementation, optimising limited resources for maximal impact. Prior to the current SP, which reduced the organisation's focus to 46 projects, there was a proliferation of micro projects (376), based on member country demand. Many areas of the Secretariat's work were 'sunsetted' to reduce duplication with other delivery at the national level, and to reinforce the Commonwealth Secretariat's identity as an inter-governmental agency. SP creation was a significant step toward clarifying the Secretariat's vision, and providing a framework to measure and report on results.

8. The SP features a clear results chain, which aligns with the priorities of the Commonwealth Charter, can be mapped to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and reflects commitments such as the Paris Agreement and other global agendas. It contains 31 Intermediate Outcomes (IOs),

which represent results to be attained within the four-year SP period and contribute to six Strategic Outcomes (SOs) of desired impacts over an eight to ten-year period. Enabling Outcomes articulate the core work in which the Secretariat is engaged across all outcome pillars; and Internal Outcomes capture the important cross-cutting operations that support SP delivery. A corresponding Strategic Results Framework (SRF) provides effective means for defining and measuring the achievement of targeted results. However, close analysis of the SP suggests that the current formulation of the SOs is at such a high-level that it is not possible to strongly attribute the Secretariat's contributions to such changes, even within an eight to ten-year timeframe. In addition, IOs are so broad that they could be reframed as longer-term impacts rather than intermediate outcomes to be achieved in four years.

9. In reflection of the divergent views involved, the final SP approved in May 2013 features several compromises to balance democracy/governance work and socioeconomic development. A revision at the Mid-Term Review (MTR) in 2015 helped to streamline the SP and its corresponding indicators; yet the current SP is still considered too broad for a £50 million portfolio. Scaling back of project areas is less dramatic than the numbers would suggest, as much ongoing work was 'repackaged', with micro-projects regrouped into a smaller portfolio of larger projects.

10. The development of Intermediate Outcome areas (IOs) has brought more efficiency to project design, review and approval processes, reduced the corporate reporting burden and has allowed increased flexibility in programming use of funds, to respond to evolving needs or contexts. Yet the vague scope of some IOs allows 'pet projects' or member country requests that fall outside the SP to be 'fitted in' retrospectively; and project and financial management systems are not oriented to support detailed planning and monitoring at the lower levels (i.e., projects and activities).

11. Conversely, some of the Secretariat's core work could be more explicit in the SP and more adequately captured in the Programme Management Information System (PMIS), which is the main tool for reporting on SP delivery and results – for example, the work of the Conference Section (i.e., the important convening role that the Secretariat plays in organising Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings [CHOGMs], ministerial meetings etc.) An example of a CHOGM mandate that fell outside the SP remit is the Commonwealth Media Development Fund (CMDF.)

12. Under the enabling outcome A2-Technical Assistance (TA), Advocacy and Partnerships, a major strength is the provision of technical assistance, a much-appreciated modality by member countries. The co-ordination between the Technical Assistance Unit (TAU) and SO teams is a rare example of harmonised working across divisions. There is scope for improvement, though, in establishing global strategies in advocacy and partnerships. In addition, the other Enabling Outcomes – Knowledge Management, in particular – could benefit from strengthening around ownership and accountability.

13. Under Internal Outcomes, staff find monitoring and reporting challenging due to the ongoing, service-level nature of their work, which does not easily lend itself to measurable outputs. Those working in Financial and non-financial Corporate Services also report that the broadness of the category makes indicator-formulation and target-setting difficult.

Organisational structure and cross-divisional collaboration

14. Extensive restructuring in 2013 aimed to ensure the organigram reflected the human resources relevant to delivery of the new SP; yet in retrospect this was a missed opportunity to align the structure in support of the SP. What the organisational reform did achieve was a cost-effective structure, with streamlined administrative support functions and reduced overhead costs. However, evaluation findings suggest that the restructure was also to some extent a political exercise, and the authority to propose the revised staffing plans for divisions was delegated to Directors. In

addition, restructuring was not coupled with automation to replace functions lost through redundancies of support staff; and some of the best staff left as downsizing was based on voluntary redundancy.

15. While the evaluation did identify a few examples of strong Divisional co-operation, overall the organisational culture appeared to be based on silos that are at best unco-ordinated and at worse competitive – extending to the Secretariat's engagement in and with member countries. Some individuals are vaguely aware of other Secretariat-supported initiatives in country, but for the most part, country-level stakeholders are not familiar with the diversity of Secretariat engagement and are not encouraged to collaborate with other project teams

16. There are missed opportunities in the SP itself for integration and synergies, which need to be tackled at the project design stage: for example, Youth and Social Development (Education/Health/Gender) and Economic Growth/Trade and Small State Resilience; and the authority of section Heads to independently take programming decisions and devise unit-level procedures, resulting in diverse and sometimes conflicting approaches across the different divisions/units/sections of the organisation.

17. The Secretariat plays an important role in convening high-level political meetings (e.g., CHOGM and ministerial meetings) and is in the process of establishing several 'hubs' to serve as formal mechanisms for knowledge-sharing and lesson-learning (e.g. the Climate Finance Access Hub, Commonwealth Education Hub etc.). Yet this evaluation revealed opportunities for cross-sectoral synergies and an appetite for the Secretariat to play a stronger role as 'thought-leader', convener and broker.

Results-based management (RBM)

18. Over the last few decades, there has been a growing interest in results among multilateral organisations, governments and other international development agencies. Despite the concentrated RBM drive of the Secretariat, evaluation findings suggest that the Secretariat is still in the early stage of

RBM maturity, and thus somewhat behind the curve in keeping track with fast-evolving RBM trends. Respondents agreed that SPED has worked hard to instil an RBM culture across the organisation.

19. Within the SP implementation period, significant RBM rollout took place across the organisation – stimulated by external pressure from the Board of Governors and contributing partners. Since the zero baseline of 2013, large numbers of staff were trained in RBM and extensive effort was put into establishing RBM systems and tools, including the RBM Framework, transformation of ARTEMIS into a more holistic project planning, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and reporting system (PMIS), and an increased emphasis on work-planning and budget monitoring.

20. High staff turnover and reform-related redundancies challenged staff capacity development efforts, and RBM also suffered from insufficient championing by Secretariat leadership in earlier days. Greater levels of ownership and accountability for RBM are still needed across divisions, along with leadership. Since the elimination of the Quality Assurance (QA) department in the 2013 restructuring, a gap in responsibility for the formal quality assurance function has been identified.

21. RBM areas for improvement were identified as follows: (1) simplification and re-engineering of PMIS to better meet users' needs, including improved integration with the financial system (CODA) and software used for human resources (HR) and other operational functions; (2) introduction of more streamlined procedures for project design, performance monitoring and quality assurance, accompanied by greater accountability of Directors/Heads; (3) enhancements to the suite of tools and templates for project/activity planning and monitoring, to facilitate day-to-day project and financial management at the delivery level (rather than for corporate use); (4) increased resources allocated to evaluation and strengthened linkages between evaluation and planning, monitoring and reporting, in order to improve organisational learning; and

(5) continued investment of sufficient time and resources in building staff capacity on RBM philosophy and principles.

Gender mainstreaming in organisational strategies, structures and systems

22.   The SP document articulates the importance of gender as a cross-cutting theme and underpins the shared values and principles of gender equality and equity set out in the Commonwealth Charter and the 2030 Agenda. Yet gender is not well integrated within the results chain or very visible in the SP structure, featuring under only one project (IO #3.3) under the Social Development SO and not as an Enabling Outcome.

23.   While gender mainstreaming in the SP itself is weak, a strong commitment is observed in the organisation's strategies, structures and systems The Secretariat has a Gender Policy (since 2012) and Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines for Project Planning. During the SP period, the Gender Section conducted a staff needs assessment and subsequently developed a training plan, which has been implemented in part. To build capacity in a cost-effective manner, an online training programme was produced; and attempts are being made to collaborate with various divisions on gender-related initiatives.

24.   There is room for improvement in: (1) application of a 'gender lens' in problem and stakeholder analyses during project design; (2) quality assurance of Project Design Documents (PDDs) to ensure they contain a gender component beyond just a 'tick-box' exercise; and (3) reporting on gender, both through stronger gender-specific and gender-mainstreaming indicators, as well as reporting templates that require information on gender-related activities and results.

25.   The elevation of the Gender Section to the Office of the Secretary-General, during the 2013 restructuring exercise, should enhance visibility and strength within the organisation. In order for the Gender Section team to meet the expectations of staff and senior management – which seek greater capacity development in gender mainstreaming – additional human and financial resources may be needed.

Operations in support of Strategic Plan delivery

Human resources

26.   The Secretariat is recognised for its high-quality technically specialised staff expertise; but effective delivery of the SP requires a full complement of human resources. Unfilled staff posts and high turnover rates have posed a significant challenge in effectively delivering against the SP. This is attributed to the large number of vacant posts under the restructuring period, a recruitment freeze in 2016 due to budgetary constraints, and the Secretariat's fixed-term rotation policy.

27.   The HR challenges have inhibited the organisation's ability to manage projects, implement planned activities and have affected the quality of support provided to long-term experts (LTEs) in the field. member countries are very pleased with the speed of deployment of LTEs and consultants, once projects have been approved in response to country requests. However, LTEs and contributing partners noticed a decline in HR services in recent years, although this has reportedly improved lately.

Project and financial management

28.   The SP was a major step forward in conceptualisation of a strategy, but there were problems with implementation – units report multiple and significant budget cuts, with a corresponding impact on implementation. The level of resources anticipated at the point of SP design was severely restricted in the implementation period, following a fall in member country contributions. Critically, there was no evident process to recalibrate SP ambition and priorities to reflect the new funding reality.

29.   This evaluation echoes findings of other recent appraisals – the Department for International Development's (DFID) Multilateral Aid Review (MAR) and Multilateral Development Review (MDR), the European Union's 7-Pillars Assessment, the 2015 evaluation of the Commonwealth Connects Programme (CCP) and a 2016 Meta-Evaluation – in identifying weaknesses in project and financial management. Areas

of concern include: HR voids (i.e., lack of a team leader or chair for significant durations); financial management/monitoring deficiencies; limited communication; and the perceived absence of exit/sustainability planning. Another recurring problem is under-spending, which KPMG audits of 2014–15 attributed to a combination of operational, management and strategic factors.

30. Internal frustration with the Secretariat's software systems for project planning, monitoring and reporting revolved around PMIS orientation toward corporate-level data needs (the outcome level). The lack of PMIS function to support routine monitoring and management at the activity level, means that staff must revert to manual reconciliation of expenses against budgets via individual spreadsheets to monitor spending rates and forecast expenditures. This is inefficient in terms of staff time, increases the risk of human error and could be contributing to weak project management reported. Contributing to this, bureaucracy levels are high, with multiple layers of approvals and extensive paperwork related to procurement and disbursement of funds.

31. The Secretariat has seen various partners reduce or withdraw funds in recent years; and a contributing partner suggested to evaluators that channelling funds to the Secretariats of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the South African Development Community (SADC), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and other regional economic commissions (RECs) may be preferable to funding the Commonwealth Secretariat. In order to maintain funding levels and secure the additional funds necessary to deliver the SP in full, the Secretariat must gain the confidence of its member countries, its contributing partners and potential new donors by demonstrating adequate project/financial management capacity.

Information and communication technology (ICT)

32. A recurring issue raised was the lack of an efficient and effective enterprise management system, to integrate data on HR, finance, procurement and monitoring,

evaluation and reporting (ME&R). A new ICT solution, which brings together information from CODA, PMIS etc., would bring benefits in terms of productivity gains, and would help address HR gaps affecting support staff, through automation/or simplification of functions.

Communications

33. This evaluation found that reporting to the Board improved during the SP period, yet communication of the SP to stakeholders beyond is weak. Interviews revealed that few development partners, donors and even government officials in member countries (including the Secretariat's Primary Contact Persons – PCPs) are familiar with the SP or aware of the full range of Secretariat engagement. CHOGM, ministerial meetings and informal, ad hoc encounters with staff and consultants are presently the main channels by which stakeholders learn about the Secretariat's work and strategic priority areas. As a result, the Secretariat lacks visibility – a finding that is substantiated in various other recent evaluations.

34. Currently, there is a split between quantitative data and reporting on results (by SPED to the Board), and documentation of activities and stories (by the Communications [COM] team to the general public.) Integrated communication efforts and outputs could reap more communication benefits.

35. The level of satisfaction with routine communications pertaining to project planning and implementation varies, depending on the stakeholder group and the stage of programming. LTEs and consultants are generally satisfied with communications with technical supervisors, who they find accommodating and professional.

36. Ministry staff in member countries expressed strong satisfaction with their Secretariat technical counterparts and both the frequency and quality of communications. However, some concerns were voiced on the length of the process to consider and approve requests. Given the lack of Secretariat presence on ground, there may

need to be more active contact and updating of contact information for PCPs and other key counterparts.

Partnerships and collaboration

Commonwealth organisations

37. Most respondents applauded the specific reference to partnerships in the Commonwealth Charter and the emphasis on acknowledging the totality of the Commonwealth family; yet each Commonwealth organisation struggles to maintain its own identity within this. Commonwealth organisations aspire to co-ordination and joint planning with the Secretariat, to map contributions and develop a joint agenda for the Commonwealth as a whole. At present Secretariat engagement with Commonwealth organisations is ad hoc; and Commonwealth organisations have not yet received their desired proactive outreach from and collaboration with the Secretariat.

38. The Eminent Persons Group (EPG) gave examples of specific organisations with comparative advantage for delivery of certain initiatives on the ground. Some cases of Secretariat duplication of activities that are the mandate of Commonwealth organisations are reported.

39. Rather than a common coalescing around the Commonwealth brand, there is a lack of coherence and synergies. Commonwealth organisations feel that as the largest and best resourced among them, the Secretariat should facilitate Commonwealth organisations to 'sing from the same hymn sheet' – emphasising the role of a Secretariat, rather than implementer.

40. The Secretariat approach to corral joint working through a focal point is perceived as 'gatekeeping' and not helpful in building relationships between technical counterparts in the respective organisations.

Other partnerships

41. The Secretariat's reputation – among organisations that know it – is generally very strong, especially as a trusted partner of member countries. Since its work is driven by member country requests, the Secretariat's

operational partnerships with government agencies, for example, via embedded experts within the ministries, is highly relevant.

42. Co-ordination of project-based activities with a range of implementing partners is evidenced in the Secretariat's annual and semi-annual progress reports. Yet in order for the Secretariat to achieve value for money and maximise resources, opportunities for collaboration and engagement in strategic partnerships will need to be better explored.

Results and benefits to member countries

Satisfaction levels and perceived comparative advantages

43. Respondents have diverging interests and views on Secretariat priority areas, but agree that the Secretariat cannot and should not 'do all' and 'be all', as this will limit its potential impact. According to most respondents of this evaluation, that means primarily concentrating on work in democracy and governance (such as elections), policy and legal reform, judiciary/rule of law, and human rights – where reputation is the strongest and where bilateral organisations (like High Commissions) cannot directly intervene due to political sensitivities. Many stakeholders consulted felt that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and bilateral partners have the comparative advantage, resources and in-country presence for 'development' work.

44. This dichotomy of democracy versus development has evolved in the context of the Secretariat; and yet they are inter-twined and have potential to mutually reinforce each other. One of the Secretariat's real comparative advantages is its ability to combine development and democracy narratives – there are plenty of organisations that can do either/or but few combine the two.

45. The Secretariat's unique value proposition in supporting small island developing states (SIDS) through amplifying their voice in global matters and strengthening their development is uncontested. Another unique attribute recognised is the historical context of this association, whereby members share values

and principles. Member country 'opt in' with a clear political commitment and conviction on the difference the Commonwealth can make.

46. Direct interaction with Heads of a State is a feature that even the UN would like to emulate, a 'direct line' and ability to influence, reinforced by empowerment of governments across technical areas. Significantly, Secretariat funds come with 'no strings attached', unlike those of other agencies who attach conditionalities.

47. The Secretariat has an extremely strong reputation for specific niche activities and tailored bespoke requests for support. Compared to other development partners 'who dictate more', the Secretariat is perceived to listen, enrich the request, facilitate South–South co-operation, and a high-quality response. It is found to be very effective at facilitating national and regional networking – in seeking to understand the focus at the national level, and bringing all parties to the table.

Outcomes

48. This section discusses results within the Strategic Outcomes, Enabling Outcomes and Internal Outcomes, mostly on the basis of the eight sampled projects: Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions; National Human Rights Institutions; National Health Frameworks and Policies in the Commonwealth; Trade and Competitiveness in the Commonwealth; Debt Management Capacity in Member States; Climate Finance Frameworks; Technical Assistance (TA), referrals and partnerships mechanisms; and Quality and Results in the new Strategic Plan. The sampling frame excluded certain initiatives, namely: 1) the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), which was being evaluated concurrently by a separate evaluation; and 2) other core areas of the Secretariat's work such as CHOGM, ministerial meetings, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG), Good Offices etc.

49. Higher-order results (outcomes/impact) were the most challenging for the evaluators to assess, given the wide breadth of the evaluation focus, insufficient data on results beyond outputs and the limited access to Member country respondents. The outcomes of SP implementation were primarily examined through two field visits to Seychelles and Vanuatu, so the findings draw heavily on the data collected on these missions.

50. In Seychelles, the Secretariat has been responding to country requests: to assist with electoral management, by participating in election observations and providing experts to advise on the electoral reform process; in human rights, by strengthening the National Human Rights Commission; in rule of law/ justice work, by placing judges and a court administration adviser in the Supreme Court; in trade, by providing trade advisers to enable the country's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as a long-term expert in the Office of Intellectual Property; in debt management, by building capacity to use the Secretariat's signature debt management software; and in oceans and natural resources management, by furthering the Blue Economy initiative.

51. In Vanuatu, most of the Secretariat's priority outcome areas are supported, with close linkages between the work done in rule of law, elections and political reform. The Secretariat has placed a master of the court and judges in the Supreme Court, who have helped to reduce the backlog of cases and set high standards for justice and independence of the judiciary. Following the conviction of Members of Parliament for corruption by the Supreme Court, the Secretariat supported parliamentary elections and constitutional reform efforts, and is currently assisting with the public awareness campaign for the upcoming referendum. The Secretariat has also contributed to oceans and natural resources management, and is exploring a partnership with the Government of Vanuatu in climate financing.

Results/advances in gender

52. Gender work at country level predominantly involves developing policies for mainstreaming, gender or equality strategy, or capacity building to institutionalise these. Most results documented pertain to activities – not outcomes or impacts – and derive from Headquarters (HQ)-led work. The 2016

Meta-Evaluation found that gender was not a commonly occurring theme and this evaluation corroborates, noting a lack of data on gender outcomes.

53. Gender-related support to member countries is mainly delivered through technical assistance mechanisms upon demand, yet it seems likely that those countries most in need of gender advances are the least likely ones to request assistance in this area.

Sustainability

54. The evaluation identified examples of sustainable practice in the Secretariat context, as follows:

   a. Technical assistance that is demand-driven (rather than supply-led), allocates time to build ownership and buy-in, consists of ongoing support (rather than one-time inputs), and is part of a longer-term commitment or partnership. Example: the LTE modality of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC).

   b. Reliable financing, with financial commitments beyond a single project cycle or improved access to alternative sources of funding beyond the Secretariat's direct support. Example: Climate Finance Access Hub.

   c. Cost-efficient models, such as regional hubs for technical assistance, regional trainings and leveraging of partnerships to combine resources. Example: Hubs and Spokes programme.

   d. Focus on documentation of lessons, knowledge management and information exchange, to promote learning across the Commonwealth network, as well as piloting and scaling-up/replicating good practices Example: Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM) and ministerial meetings.

   e. Playing the role of a catalyst, broker and capacity-developer more so than an implementer or funder. (Negative) Example: Commonwealth Connects Programme (CCP).

55. This evaluation supports the findings of the 2010 Evaluation of Secretariat's Training Programme and SPED 2013 Meta-Evaluation, which found that sustainable impact of Secretariat capacity projects was seriously hampered by a general lack of understanding of best practice approaches in capacity development; and that short one-off training events are a major factor contributing to the unsustainability of projects.

Lessons

56. A series of lessons were derived, focusing on what should be done the same or differently in future Strategic Plan design and implementation:

   a. Strategic Plan development/consultation must be strongly owned and managed;

   b. for SP implementation to be effective, it is critical that the SP documents reflect reality or that implementation adheres to the SPs;

   c. the identity of the Secretariat has been contested through the dichotomising of democracy and development narratives, yet the combination of these is part of the Secretariat's unique value proposition (UVP);

   d. the historical association and shared values of the Commonwealth strengthen the sense of conviction of the difference the Secretariat can make;

   e. organisational restructuring that is integrated with the SP development process poses fewer risks for implementation;

   f. silo working undermines the ability of the Secretariat to become more than the sum of its parts;

   g. institutionalising RBM requires ownership at all levels of the organisation;

   h. as the largest and best-resourced of the COs, the Secretariat is expected to proactively facilitate the collaboration of the Commonwealth family;

   i. in order to respond to SDGs effectively, gender will need to be better integrated into the SP;

j.   the Secretariat lacks visibility since communication of the SP to stakeholders is weak; and

k.   the Secretariat has a strong reputation with many respondents, despite limited funds.

Recommendations

57.   Due to the wide scope of the evaluation, 39 strategic and operational recommendations were generated, relating to each of the sections above.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Commonwealth Secretariat is an intergovernmental organisation established in 1965, comprising 52 member countries. Guided by its Strategic Plan (SP) and the Commonwealth Charter, the Secretariat promotes democracy, rule of law, human rights, good governance, and social and economic development, and it provides a voice for small states and youth empowerment.

The SP for the period 2013/14 to 2016/17 was developed after extensive consultation with member governments. It is more narrowly focused than previous plans, as directed by Commonwealth Heads of Government. With the aim of optimising limited resources and achieving greater impact, more than 200 small projects were consolidated and reduced to 46 project areas. The plan maintains a balance of outcomes and allocation of effort between the longstanding 'democracy' and 'development' work of the Secretariat's work. It also considers agreed recommendations of the 2011 report of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG).

Reflecting the shared priorities of member governments, the current SP includes three overarching goals, namely:

- Strong democracy, rule of law, promotion and protection of human rights, and respect for diversity

- Inclusive growth and sustainable development

- A well-connected and networked Commonwealth

The plan includes six Strategic Outcomes (SOs), which represent the Secretariat's desired areas of impact to be pursued over eight to ten years. Each SO has a set of Intermediate Outcomes (IOs), which are the intermediate results to be attained in the four years of the SP period. The plan is supported by a Strategic Results Framework (SRF), which provides indicators for the SOs and IOs. In addition, the SRF also has four Enabling Outcomes and three Internal Outcomes. The Enabling Outcomes are those results that underpin the Intermediate Outcomes. The Internal Outcomes aim to ensure an efficiently run organisation that promotes the delivery of the enabling and intermediate results.

Following the approval of the new SP in May 2013, organisational reform to align the Secretariat's structure and processes with the new strategy was undertaken. Efforts to institutionalise results-based management (RBM) were reinforced throughout the entire organisation; and they continue today, spearheaded by the RBM team within the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Division (SPED).

A Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (ME&R) Framework complements the SRF to help the Secretariat assess results and report on progress in achieving the agreed outcomes. The Programme Management Information System (PMIS) is the main tool used to facilitate results-oriented project design, planning, monitoring and reporting that is mapped to the SRF.

An internal Mid-Term Review (MTR) was conducted in mid-2015, informed by two KPMG audits on the Strategic and Business Planning Process and on Project Outcomes/Delivery. As a result of the MTR, a more robust SRF was developed with specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) indicators. Baselines and targets were determined, and projects were reduced from 31 to 29.

1.2 Purpose of this evaluation

The Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT) of the University of Wolverhampton was contracted to conduct an independent evaluation of the current SP. This evaluation was commissioned by SPED to provide a robust, independent view of the design of the SP, the implementation approach, and how the organisation has progressed against the priorities set forth in the SP, while highlighting challenges and risks that affect delivery. The terms of reference (ToR) required the evaluators to make recommendations from both strategic and operational perspectives, for application in the development of the next SP and in future strategic planning and reform exercises.

According to the ToR and scoping mission, the specific objectives of this evaluation were to:

a. evaluate the extent to which the Secretariat's projects and initiatives are relevant to the agreed priorities of member countries and consistent with outcomes of the SP;

b. assess the RBM approach and system used in the design and delivery of the SP;

c. assess the process and outcomes of the organisational reform and restructuring on delivery of the SP, and make a judgement on whether the structure follows the strategy;

d. assess the operational planning aspects of delivery of the SP and suggest improvements, if necessary;

e. assess the level of alignment of the SP to global development agenda and make recommendations for alignment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

f. assess the extent to which member countries have benefited from the Secretariat's work and tangible outcomes have been realised;

g. assess the extent of gender mainstreaming enabled and realised through the SP; and

h. identify issues, challenges and lessons learned and make recommendations for the development of the next SP (covering 2017/18–2021/22).

The research questions pertaining to these objectives were grouped into two main themes:

- **External perceptions:** What are the member countries' views on the current SP and how well it aligns with their own needs and priorities? How beneficial has the Secretariat's work been to member countries and partners during the SP period? How should the Secretariat address demand from the Commonwealth countries, with its available resources and while remaining focused on its comparative advantages?

- **Internal perceptions:** How helpful has the current SP, the corresponding RBM system and related tools been to the Commonwealth Secretariat's staff? To what extent has organisational reform and restructuring enabled or inhibited delivery of the SP? Going forward, what could be done differently to enable improvements in strategic and operational planning, MR&E and RBM?

The findings of this evaluation will be used for internal accountability and improvements around the RBM approach/system, ME&R and delivery of the current SP. They should also inform the development of future SPs.

2. Methodology

2.1 Summary of methods used

The Evaluation Framework submitted to SPED within the Inception Report (in September 2016) served as the blueprint for the evaluation, setting out the parameters of the data collection and the focal areas. It proposed the following data collection methods, which are described in Annex A:

1. Consultation and scoping visit

2. Document review

3. UK-based face-to-face interviews

4. Virtual interviews (by telephone and/or Skype)

5. Field Missions

Most the data analysed for this evaluation was collected through interviews – both face-to-face and virtual – with a wide variety of stakeholders, including:

- Commonwealth Secretariat staff at various levels, representing all divisions/departments at the London HQ office as well as a few significant former staff;

- consultants and long-term technical experts (LTEs) based within government agencies in member countries;

- collaborating partners, beneficiaries and other project stakeholders in selected countries;

- representatives from Commonwealth organisations (COs); and

- development partners/contributors, such as the European Commission (EC) and High Commissions at the national level.

A total of 109 people were interviewed via 73 sessions, of which 68 per cent (50) were conducted in person and 32 per cent (23) were carried out by telephone or Skype. The list of respondents reached is in *Annex B* and the question sets were annexed to the Inception Report.

A desk review of 137 documents was conducted, to validate the findings of the interviews and fill gaps. See *Annex C* for the full list of materials reviewed.

A sample of eight representative projects was selected by the Secretariat for further study, from which conclusions on performance and challenges across the portfolio were derived. The intention was not to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of each individual project; rather it was to compile case studies that produce concrete examples and relevant lessons.

The ToR for this evaluation called for field visits in two countries, to evaluate the Secretariat's engagement in more depth at the national level. It was envisaged that the fieldwork would be particularly helpful for exploring issues of sustainability and results, as well as perceptions of the Secretariat's reputation and comparative advantages. The final 'Tier 1' countries selected (partly for logistical reasons) by the Secretariat were **Vanuatu** (in the Pacific) and **Seychelles** (in Africa), based on the selection criteria proposed by the evaluators in the Inception Report. See *Annex D* for summaries of the information gathered in the field visits.

In addition to the two field visits, six countries were initially selected for virtual consultations, to ensure a wider participation of member countries in this evaluation. Factors considered in the selection process were presented in the Inception Report. These 'Tier 2' countries were initially: Grenada, Jamaica, Maldives, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Seychelles and Sri Lanka. Seychelles replaced Mozambique as a Tier 1 country partway through the data collection process; and Maldives was removed from the respondent list when it withdrew from the Commonwealth while the evaluation was under way. Furthermore, the evaluators were not able to interview anyone from PNG. Therefore, the virtual interviews were ultimately conducted with respondents representing these four countries: Grenada, Jamaica, Mozambique and Sri Lanka.

2.2 Limitations

Every study has a set of limitations. The limitations of this evaluation are as follows:

- **Timing of the evaluation:** The evaluation took place during a challenging period at the Secretariat, when reforms (including proposed restructuring and staff redundancies) and

development of a new SP (for 2016/17–2019/20) was called for earlier than had been anticipated. This fast-changing context hindered access to certain respondent groups. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations of this evaluation may still inform the process for developing the next SP.

- **Low response rate for virtual interviews with member country stakeholders:** A total of 27 representatives of member countries (e.g., the Secretariat's PCPs and other government partners/beneficiaries) were invited to participate in a virtual interview (by telephone or Skype) across the five Tier 2 countries. Interviews were conducted with 30 per cent (9) of those contacted (although each stakeholder received a notification from SPED and were contacted two to three times by CIDT for follow-up.) While the aim was to interview at least the PCP for each Tier 2 country, only two PCPs participated. Since only one or two people were interviewed for most countries, it is not possible to generalise the findings and make countrywide conclusions.

- **Inability to interview UK-based High Commissioners and Regional Deans (Board of Governors members):** Due to the organisational change context, evaluators were not facilitated to consult with Board members (High Commissioners, Regional Deans) and other stakeholders that the evaluators considered critical for this evaluation (i.e., the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office [FCO] and the Department for International Development [DFID]). This is a significant weakness.

- **Low number of field visits:** More field visits were needed to do justice to an evaluation of this scope and breadth, but the ToRs (and corresponding budget) allowed for two country visits.

- **Selection of two small states as the countries for field visits:** The countries selected were proposed due to the range of Secretariat engagement across SP Intermediate Outcomes; therefore, it may be considered as a biased sample that is not necessarily representative of the level of work going on in members across the Commonwealth. The small size of the countries facilitated planning and logistics

of the fieldwork, but it skewed the findings toward the perspectives of small states – and the voice of larger member countries was missing from the evaluation process.

- **Ascertaining outcomes and impact:** Higher-order results were the most challenging for the evaluators to assess, given the wide breadth of the evaluation focus, insufficient data on higher-order results (outcomes/impact) and the limited access to respondents. The evaluators drew on the SP Monitoring Reports and evaluations commissioned which covered the SP period[1] to identify further evidence, as well as interviews with project staff, LTEs and partners; however, the types of information provided mostly concerned activities and outputs, rather than outcomes or impacts. In this regard, conclusions about the benefits of the SP to member countries had to be primarily based on findings of the document review and the perceived comparative advantages of the Secretariat as reported by the stakeholders.

- **Exclusion of certain initiatives from the sampled projects:** Because a large evaluation of the Secretariat's Youth programme was being undertaken concurrently with this evaluation, no projects were selected from the SO concerned with Youth. As a result, youth was only marginally considered – if at all – in this evaluation and very few findings discussed the effectiveness or results of the Secretariat's work in youth. Likewise, other core areas of the Secretariat's work were not covered by the evaluation, such as CHOGM, ministerial meetings, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG), Good Offices etc.

- **Presence of Secretariat staff member (Head of Evaluation) in face-to-face interviews in Vanuatu:** The presence of a Secretariat staff member may have introduced a slight bias, particularly when respondents were asked to share value judgements on the quality of support provided by the Secretariat. However, on balance the benefits of the Secretariat presence outweighed this minor limitation, because it gave the interviews much more depth and contextual relevance.

3. Findings: Relevance

3.1 Strategic Plan development

> **Key message**: Strategic Plan development/consultation must be strongly owned and managed. Prolonged consultation – without sufficient management of stakeholder expectations – hindered implementation of the SP and exacerbated tension.

3.1.1 Quality of the Strategic Plan consultation process

The development of the SP involved engagement with both internal and external stakeholders that had diverse views and sometimes-conflicting interests. Consequently, it was a very challenging and time-consuming process, whereby the Board of Governors rejected the initial SP that emerged from the first round of consultations. The process of consultation, development, finalisation and approval of the SP took two years, and required a year's extension of the previous strategic plan.

Yet the Secretariat, and SPED in particular, should be commended for its efforts to undertake a participatory process for the development of the SP. Extensive stakeholder engagement is essential for ensuring that the SP is relevant, contextually-appropriate and has strong ownership by those that will deliver it and benefit from it. 'Given the challenging circumstances, they've done pretty well', said one external respondent.

It is important to locate the consultation process within the Secretariat's context as an inter-governmental organisation. The SP is the product of complex negotiations with diverse parties, bringing different perspectives and interests to the table, and vigorous discussion was necessary to eventually find common ground. Staff members report that the SP was 'a result of consensus' and 'a product that staff can take to member countries and say "this is what came from you"'.

Key points regarding the consultation of both external and internal audiences are noted below.

Member countries and partners

There was deeper and broader engagement in the consultation for preparation of the SP than historically. Initially, a questionnaire was sent to high-level officials (PCPs and others), but the response rate was low and there was a high-income country bias in the returns (reflecting capacity to respond.) Many roundtable meetings were then held with High Commissioners, and the Board consulted government authorities in capital cities more than ever before; however, line ministries and other member country representatives were not consulted directly. This lack of consultation of technical,

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Box 3.1 Example of strong country ownership – Seychelles

There is a very good working relationship with the Commonwealth Secretariat via the High Commission in London, which is tasked to engage at different levels. The Secretariat plays a proactive role to give a voice to Seychelles, both as a small island and as an African nation. Nationally, the government feels reassured that its submissions always get positive feedback from the Secretariat. The SP's SOs align well with Seychelles' priorities and mirrors what it, as a small state, is pushing for. The Secretariat has strong voice in outlining challenges that small states face – it understands the core issues of countries like Seychelles. It is responsive to requests, despite budgetary constraints. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has observed that the Secretariat objectives are more focused than in the past – it is more clearly understood what the Secretariat wants to do.

Government official in Seychelles

rather than political, stakeholders in-country was raised as a shortcoming. PCPs were the principal respondent, yet they were not always aware of the Secretariat's Divisional engagements, and they seemed to change frequently. Furthermore, some Commonwealth organisations reported that they were not formally consulted in the SP process.

Challenges in reconciliation of priorities emerged, due largely to a vulcanisation of interests revealing a North–South divide. The Northern members prioritised political values as the Commonwealth comparative advantage, while Southern states felt that development work was central, and discussions became somewhat acrimonious.[2] Major contributors (e.g., Canada, UK, Australia) drove the focus on democracy and the political wing, believing that development work should be carried out by bilateral donors; meanwhile other member countries felt that if the Commonwealth cannot assist with development issues, then it is of little value and they cannot justify the membership contributions to their citizens. Stakeholders reported that the consultation became an overly comprehensive and participatory process. Achieving a balance between the demands of the majority of members (developing countries) and the funding priorities of major contributors represents a key challenge for the Secretariat in setting out future agendas.

Staff

Internally, the consultation process was equally challenging, as one respondent explained: 'The consultation was a tricky and difficult exercise. Internally, every Division wanted to protect its own interests, and there was a supply driven tendency'. Consultations with staff took place at Director level and above, with little opportunity for technical staff (advisers) to give input, creating a disconnect with those involved in delivery. As a result, the SP is said to reflect a general picture of the work, rather than the technical realities. Results from the initial member country consultation were not shared with staff, and the Senior Management Group (SMG) was not convened to discuss the SP. It was a top-down process with a limited window for staff input, and thus Directors reportedly fought hard to get even minor changes made to the draft SP.

The rather top-down approach to developing this SP was apparently opted for on the basis of the Secretariat's experience in the previous SP round,

which featured a highly participatory, bottom-up approach and which had been challenging to manage. Adding to the pressure, the final version of the SP had to be finished quickly, and divisions were under huge pressure to produce concrete outputs and activities within a short timeframe. Indicators only came as an after-thought and line managers were not clear what type of indicators to propose and how to monitor them.

Under the subsequent restructuring there were many staff departures and, thus, most divisions ended up with a new Director and advisers who did not understand the original projects, leading to a shift in focus in some areas. Prior to the MTR, many project teams did not feel ownership of the results frameworks and felt that the SRF did not speak to the work they were engaged in. The post-MTR work to redesign the SP and related tools helped improve ownership dramatically.

3.1.2 The final product

Due to the prolonged consultation and divergent views involved, the final, approved version of the SP (dated May 2013) reflected several compromises. 'The final product was a compromise as a result of a fraught process. It is impossible to achieve a 'perfect' Strategic Plan, and the final product reflected those tensions', reported one respondent, reflecting the views of many. 'Given the challenging circumstances, I think they've done well – especially on the Strategic Plan', said an external respondent.

The SP started with five results areas, which grew to 31 during the consultation process, in an attempt to balance the expectations of multiple and diverse stakeholder groups. The Board and staff struggled with where on a spectrum of very broad versus very narrow programming the Secretariat should locate its operations. Yet a strong portfolio prioritisation process was never concluded – according to several respondents, attaching the budget would have been an effective mechanism to force the prioritisation and move away from a 'wish list' of results/activity areas. In the end, the Secretariat ended up retaining more than it could realistically handle with the available funds, affecting its programming credibility. The current SP is considered by many to be too broad for a £50 million portfolio.

The SP safeguards democratic institutions, which is ingrained in Commonwealth culture and adds value for the larger member countries, for whom

the benefits of Secretariat development activities may have less impact. The debates centred on 'how much of the pie' should go to socioeconomic development. In the words of one stakeholder: 'The Secretariat saw what it could do best reflected in the SP, but it was on the issue of Commonwealth comparative advantage where the debate was most vigorous'. The inclusion of Social Development in the SP was a notable challenge to negotiate and overcome, particularly in terms of whether health, education and small states should be emphasised through dedicated pillars/outcomes. Of course, the SP will always evolve, and CHOGM mandates from Malta in 2015 (such as migration and combatting violent extremism) may need to be reflected in the next SP.

3.1.3 Relevance and ownership of the Strategic Plan

The work of the Secretariat is highly relevant to the priorities of member countries, because the Secretariat does not provide any type of support that is not directly requested. One vehicle for communicating member country needs is the CHOGM meetings, yet they can also submit letters to the Secretariat detailing specific requests. Every government beneficiary interviewed attested that it was his or her agency that identified the need and proactively requested support from the Secretariat.

Yet none of the external stakeholders interviewed had participated in consultations for the design of the current SP. Many – even PCPs – were unaware that a new SP had been developed. The PCPs consulted hope to be involved in drafting subsequent SPs and find that this needs thorough discussion. It was suggested by member countries that the Secretariat convene at both the political and technical levels to discuss the new SP and conduct collective SWOT (strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats) analysis, as part of the SP design process.

Among staff, there appears to be strong ownership of and familiarity with the SP. They feel that the current plan encapsulates a multilateral programme of work and has allowed them to 'say no' to certain requests. 'Under the old SP, there was no discipline to say no'. In general, staff members felt positively that, with the new SP in place, budgets are better targeted and projects better linked to resources. In contrast: 'Before the SP, there was a flexible pot that could be spent at the discretion of the

manager. This led to the proliferation of tiny pilot projects, of which impact was limited and they were not measureable'.

Divisions have variable ownership over the SP. On one hand, for example, the Health, Education and Gender teams prepared for the SP well in advance – one Unit had a consultant for 8 months beforehand to work out indicators. In the Oceans and Natural Resources Division (ONR), in order to work according to project boundaries, brochures have been produced for each IO. This drives demand within the SP area and gives member countries insight into the scope of what the Unit offers. On the other hand, some units felt less ownership over the SP: 'A couple of outcomes shocked us. I'm being held accountable for this output and now I have to do something, but with a budget of £10,000 for capacity development of members'.

However, respondents also noted that the previous structure was stronger with regards to the clear mapping of funds to countries. One staff member summarised this issue well in saying, 'Maybe countries can no longer see how the SP directly relates to them anymore. It's become too complex for staff and for countries to understand'.

3.1.4 Recommendations for future Strategic Plan development

1. Look strategically at the geopolitical interests of member countries in future consultation rounds, including communities such as the major emerging national economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) and SADC. Consider feedback from PCPs, technical staff, ministries, partners/contributors and Commonwealth organisations; and actively plan for management of member countries expectations within future consultation processes.

2. Make financial forecasting and budgeting an integral part of the process of developing the new SP, taking place at the same time the outcomes are defined and involving a common team. Develop an accompanying Operational/Delivery Plan, in order that funding allocation be used as a key criterion for determining programming priorities and staffing levels.

3.2 Strategic Plan design

Key message: For SP implementation to be effective, it is critical that the SP documents reflect reality or that implementation adheres to the SPs. The vague scope of some IOs still allows pet projects or member country requests that fall outside the SP to be 'fitted in' retrospectively.

3.2.1 Coherence

The current SP was an attempt to reduce scattered efforts across 370 projects and programming that was mainly demand-driven. It now contains 46 projects, whereby generally one project (though sometimes more than one) feeds into a specific IO. The SP is well recognised as a considerable improvement from earlier SP iterations in better articulating the value-added of the Secretariat's engagement. One respondent reflected the views of many in saying that the Secretariat has come up with a 'surprisingly good' results framework 'given their history of false starts with RBM'.

Logic of the design

Priority areas were brought out more clearly in the six pillars of the new SP and the Secretariat's niche was better reflected. In the former SP, key themes such as small states, gender and youth were deeply buried. Although the SP has framed the Secretariat's work and given it clarity, the IOs are not consistent in their size and scope across the various SOs. For instance, some consist of a single, relatively small and focused project (i.e., a four-year initiative to establish a regional Climate Finance Access Hub for small states, under IO #6.3), while others are essentially large programmes comprising multiple projects in numerous countries (i.e., periodic election observation and ongoing support of elections and electoral reforms spanning many decades, under IO #1.3).

Respondents found the SP to be practical and purposeful, as activities are linked to long-term outcomes, budgets are better targeted and projects are linked to resources. The results chain within the SP is also quite logical. The SP and its corresponding SRF have given more structure to ME&R, as compared with the last plan (2008–12), for which indicators were only developed half-way through the period.

Box 3.2 Outlier to the plan – Commonwealth Media Development Fund (CMDF)

A review found that the CMDF portfolio of interventions directly contributed towards a range of outputs and outcomes, including: the training and capacity building of hundreds of journalists across the Commonwealth; increased awareness of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Secretariat's efforts to attain them; the development of codes of conduct and guidelines for the media; the forging of alliances between civil society organisations and the media to promote development and greater transparency; and commitments by governments.

However, the overall impact of the programme is difficult to ascertain. CMDF operations were not fully institutionalised within the Secretariat's regular programme of work. They remained outside the remit of the Strategic Plans, and escaped the rigours of the results-based management (RBM) approach to planning, delivery and reporting.

CMDF was implemented in many phases and during several Strategic Plan periods. There were no specific results or budgets assigned for each year, which made it difficult to track the scope of activities, effectiveness and outputs.

Review and Renewal of CW Media Development Fund, January 2016

Strategic and Intermediate Outcomes:

The scope of the Secretariat's work is diverse and some respondents mentioned that the IOs are essentially 'trying to change the world'. However, others feel that the SO and IO are at the appropriate level, and it is the outputs and activities *outside* the SP that need to be more strategic and focused on the organisation's comparative advantages. Still, a few others are uncomfortable with reducing the Secretariat's work and having to deny certain country requests; for instance, one staff member in the Technical Assistance Unit (TAU) expressed concern about having to say no to requests for support in agriculture/food security.

Respondents noted some areas of overlap between SOs, particularly between youth empowerment and social development (especially education/health), as well as between work in trade/industry, economic development and small states resilience. Youth has been designated as a separate outcome pillar (SO4), but the SP does not demonstrate the rationale for this.[3] Several respondents argued that youth-related programming does not have to be done exclusively by the Youth Division (YTH) and that it should not be separated out in the SP. Some also questioned the rationale of differentiating small states (SO6) from pan-Commonwealth development (SO5).

Enabling Outcomes and Internal Outcomes:

The existence of cross-cutting, more operational outcomes – i.e. Enabling Outcomes and Internal Outcomes – highlight the core work of the Secretariat and help staff to see where their work can fit in relation to the strategic trajectory of the Secretariat. Yet, it can be difficult to demonstrate meaningful and measurable results given the ongoing, routine nature of the work being done, particularly the corporate services provided under Internal Outcomes. In particular, staff working in Financial and non-Financial Corporate Services expressed that the generic nature of the Outcome Statement #B2 makes M&E/reporting a challenge.

The MTR did result in improvements to indicators, though, giving the teams more ownership and making it easier to capture measurable outputs of their efforts. It also led to a rearrangement of the outcomes that support SP delivery. For example, the Financial and non-Financial Outcome (#B2) was expanded to include Information Technology (IT), which previously represented a separate outcome.

In addition, the IO for Knowledge Management was relocated from SO5-*Development: Pan-Commonwealth* to form a fourth Enabling Outcome.

The evaluation revealed that there is room for improvement in delineating responsibilities and holding teams accountable for achieving the Enabling Outcomes, given that they generally represent collaborative work that must be done by various divisions. The experience with the Knowledge Management Outcome demonstrates this. While Knowledge Management initially had no owner, project or budget, there is now a Knowledge Management strategy and new Project Design Document (PDD), which is managed by Deputy Secretary-General (DSG)-Social and Economic Development; however, the data gathered suggest that the arrangement is not yet working well and that implementation still is not fully underway. The Enabling Outcome on Global Advocacy (#A1) has been less problematic in this regard, yet still reveals the challenge of ensuring a harmonised approach to programming across the various teams involved. Every Division has developed its own Advocacy project and a corresponding PDD; yet there has been a proposal to harmonise these into one global advocacy strategy.

The addition of an Enabling Outcome dedicated to Global Advocacy in this SP was a positive step, in that this was the first time the Secretariat's ministerial meetings and other high-level convening work have been highlighted in an SP. Nevertheless, many respondents perceived that the important Secretariat role of convening large strategic meetings remains under-represented and too hidden, given that planning a ministerial meeting or a CHOGM can be all-consuming for staff and can represent a whole year's work. The Secretariat may consider a more explicit focus on the important convening and consensus-building role it plays in the next SP. Evaluators have learned that there may be a cross-cutting theme on Consensus-Building in the new SP (to replace Global Advocacy), which includes ministerial meetings, and this will likely address this concern.

Likewise, respondents claim that the LTEs are somewhat buried in the SP, despite the provision of technical assistance being a modality that is much appreciated by member countries and is something the Secretariat is historically known for. A total of 72 technical assistance projects transitioned into the new SP and were consolidated as one project

under the Enabling Outcomes (#A2). Yet the outcomes of this technical assistance are reflected in the respective IOs that they contribute to. This is a rare and positive example of harmonised working across divisions, in an organisation where silo working is reported as a massive challenge. Some of these observations could simply reflect the fact that the SP is a high-level strategic document focused on four-year outcomes (IOs), whereas technical assistance and convening are organisational outputs that should be captured at a lower level in the results chain – and for that reason, the evaluators do not recommend bringing technical assistance to a higher level (i.e., IO or SO). Nevertheless, it is important to highlight this view since it was quite prevalent among staff.

A discrepancy between the SP and the organisational structure was noted in relation to the Gender mainstreaming function. The Gender team has a mandate internally as well as externally, and yet the SP does not include Gender as an Enabling Outcome. The evaluation considers the presentation of Gender as a single project within the Social Development SO risks undermining the Secretariat's mainstreaming efforts.

This evaluation also noted that there is no mention of 'innovation' in the SP, which should perhaps be reflected in future Enabling Outcomes.

Coherence of the Strategic Plan and the reality

It was reported that a lot of the Secretariat's work is not captured in the outcomes of the SP. One example is the Conference Section and CHOGM meetings. The Commonwealth Media Development Fund (see Box 3.2) is an example of a separate project falling outside the SP. In addition, the 2015 evaluation of the Singapore Commonwealth Third-Country Training Programme (SCTCTP) showed that this initiative needed to be firmly embedded within a Division's annual plan with clear and separate results to be achieved, both at the delivery level and the intended impact within the wider programme of support. These important and relatively significant pieces of work need to be better fitted into the next SP.

The evaluation also revealed that there are still some activities being implemented that cannot be reported against the SP's short-term outcomes. For instance, the activities being implemented under the National Health Frameworks and Policies

project are not accurately reflected in the results statements and indicators of the PDD – because the work being done differs from what was planned. Findings suggest that this issue arises from a discrepancy between what is on paper and what is happening in practice. For example, the Commonwealth Connects Final Evaluation (2015) noted that 'ICT for development is not only absent from the Strategic Plan as a strategic outcome, but it is also absent as an intermediate outcome within any of the identified six strategic outcomes'. Although 'ICT for Development' was one of the areas sunsetted in the current SP, the work apparently continued. For SP delivery to function properly and for the Secretariat's ME&R efforts to comprehensively capture the work done and results achieved, it is critical that such discrepancies be eliminated, either by revising the documents to reflect reality or by ensuring that implementation adheres to the project plans.

Apparently, some member country requests are still approved despite a lack of alignment with any particular IO. SPED is trying to discourage this in its recommendations to management. However, this practice can be difficult to curb because historically programming has been solely driven by member countries' requests, more so than by strategic vision and organisational priorities, due to the political nature of the organisation. Respondents report that, in reality, most member countries will take whatever support the Secretariat can offer – 'if you say you can provide support in X, Y and Z, then they will say yes to it all', claimed a representative of a partner organisation that also functions as a donor. This highlights the importance of the SP's potential role in helping the Secretariat to prioritise its areas of focus and in providing a framework/justification for the approval (or denial) of member country requests.

In principle, no work should be done that falls outside of the SP; and the ME&R systems and tools should capture everything that the Secretariat does. At the time of writing, PMIS does not capture all aspects of the Secretariat's work for the reasons cited above – it is set up so that work can only be reported against the agreed results that are reflected in the SP. Consequently, for six-monthly reporting, some staff find themselves retrospectively trying to justify their work against the expected results. A respondent from SPED said that they hoped that this phenomenon 'is

Box 3.3 Managing member countries' requests and ensuring their alignment with the Strategic Plan

Findings revealed a tension between adhering to the priorities of a more focused SP, while also being responsive to member countries' needs and requests for support. Some staff feel uncomfortable 'saying no' to satisfy all member countries' requests – especially those from member countries that rarely request support. The consistent application of a clear, objective and systematic process for reviewing requests and ensuring that they align with the SP would alleviate this.

According to respondents, staff should ideally: analyse the request, through a needs assessment exercise that gives more background on the gap or problem to be addressed; clearly communicate to the member countries about the parameters in which support can be provided; and collaborate with the PCP to revise the request so that it aligns with both the SP and the country's needs, where possible. TAU appears to do this well. YTH has also moved towards a model which first provides pan-Commonwealth thought leadership, followed by regional-level capacity building, and then national-level technical assistance on a specific issue, which represents a more consistent, cohesive engagement.

There is room for improvement in the administrative aspects of managing member country requests. For instance, combining many into a single response would be particularly relevant for capacity development requests from various countries in a single region – to provide a single regional training, for instance. This would not necessarily entail limiting the requests, but having a different approach to the Request Register.

decreasing and is not significant – but it is hard to know because it's not in the system. In fact, nobody really knows the full picture'.

Key differences to Secretariat programming pre/post Strategic Plan

The creation of the SP was a significant step toward giving the organisation a vision, providing a framework for measuring and reporting on results, and setting the stage for potential efficiencies. Prior to the current plan, programming was reportedly based on the philosophy that the Commonwealth Secretariat '... is like a fire engine – we have to go to anywhere the fire is'. The 2013 SP exercise was the first deliberate effort towards RBM-oriented implementation and hence the SP reduced the organisation's focus to 46 areas. Figure 3.1 is taken from the SP Monitoring Plan 2013–14 to show the reduction in the number of projects per sector before/after the SP was introduced.

Many areas of the Secretariat's work were 'sunsetted' – such as disaster management, science and technology, industrial development, export market development, tourism, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) – mostly because the Secretariat did not have a comparative advantage in those areas or there was another Commonwealth organisation working on that area (e.g., the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation). In that regard, this SP aimed to move the Secretariat away from duplicating delivery at the national level, and to reinforce the Secretariat's identity as an inter-governmental agency that brokers with key partners to deliver on the ground.

Some staff members consulted pointed to discrepancies between what is on paper (the SP) and what is happening in reality, however. The findings suggest that the types of services offered and activities supported on the ground have not significantly changed, even though the number of projects has decreased on paper.[4] While certain project areas or approaches have been eliminated or scaled down, changes in implementation seem less dramatic than the numbers would suggest (i.e., a reduction in the number of projects from over 300 to 46). It appears that ongoing work was mostly 'repackaged', with many of the past small projects regrouped into a smaller set of larger projects. As such, a single 'project', or PDD in PMIS, may refer to a large programme consisting of a collection of

Figure 3.1. Number of former and current projects
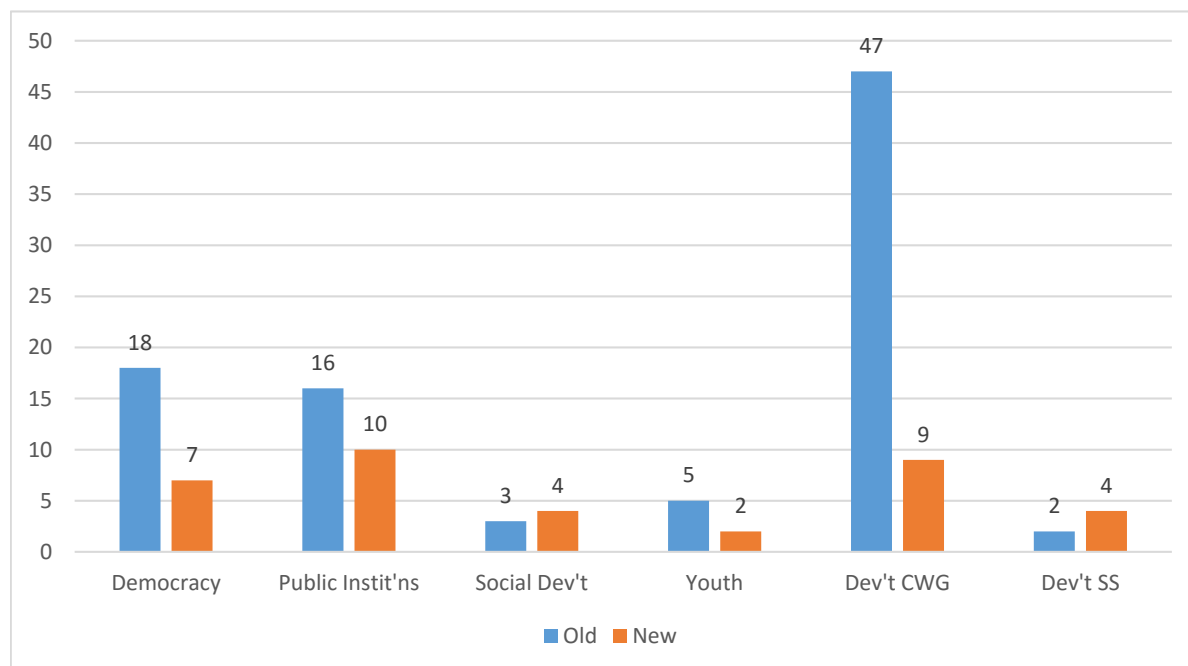
projects of varying sizes – some spanning multiple countries. As one person put it, 'what we call a project [in the system] isn't really a project'.

The grouping of projects is understandable, given the difficulty of fitting all the Secretariat's work into the confines of a 'project', as the SP and PMIS define it. This is particularly the case for ongoing work that represents 'business as usual' at the Secretariat and, as such, is more of a long-term programme than a project with a set lifecycle. Examples include the organisation's 'bread and butter' work, such as:

- support of recurring Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) meetings;

- election observations, which are carried out annually;

- the work of long-term experts that are seconded by the Secretariat; and

- ongoing policy and legal reform efforts, for which the results (adoption of legislation/ policy) may occur long after the support to a legislative drafter has ended.

To break these initiatives into discrete projects would mean reverting to a huge list of small projects, which were essentially mostly activities (e.g., election observation in a single country). Another justification for this approach is that some

business could continue during the first six months of the SP, rather than being interrupted while divisions worked to develop new projects.

The examples below show how some teams interpreted the SP in packaging their work, illustrating the diversity in how each team approached the task:

- **The Human Rights Unit (HRU)** consolidated its existing work into three PDDs (one for the National Human Rights Institution [NHRI]- related work), for the following reasons: they deemed it important to build on previous work done in thematic areas; there were very useful lessons learnt which ought to inform the new consolidated PDDs; certain member states preferred the Secretariat to be the provider of technical assistance in these three areas; and because of the sensitivity of the work areas. Several projects were sunsetted to enable more focus on regional capacity development and sharing of best practice through peer-to-peer learnings, as well as to introduce one-to-one capacity development. Some legacy projects were wound down but not stopped completely – e.g. support to ratification of the Convention on Disability – in recognition that other organisations were covering this area.

- **The Youth Division (YTH)** did reorganise many existing projects into new structures; but this is not necessarily a negative thing, as thinking through the work made it more ordered, strategic and cohesive, and eradicated on-ground work that benefitted only a few member countries. The Youth team is very clear on the contribution of activities to results, and how they fit together; it has a series of interventions which are all linked. The SP gave the Division more authority to flex budgets to support its work.

- **The Oceans Section (ONR)** also found that its work did not change. As one of the newest components of the SP, the team's main challenge is how deal with the high volume of requests.

- **The Trade Division** has 22 subprojects (also referred to as 'projects') under its four categories.

- **The Health and Education Unit** (HEU) shifted away from remotely managed smaller-scale education and health projects, towards working with members to fill wider policy and framework gaps that will support member countries' national implementation of the SDGs going forward.

- **The Technical Assistance Unit** (TAU) was one of the units that most transformed under the SP, with a total of 72 technical assistance projects transitioned into one project. The outcomes of Technical Assistance are reflected in the respective Intermediate Outcomes section that it contributes to; however, this does present a challenge to capture results at the unit level.

Given that the IOs are not consistent in their size and scope across the six SOs, some divisions/units retained more flexibility in programming than others. Thus, the SP has been described as a 'shell' for work that the Commonwealth Secretariat historically did well or is deemed as important. The lofty nature of the IOs enables staff to 'justify and find homes for random bits of work'. These 'abuses' of the SP seem to mostly arise from either 'pet projects' of sector Heads or the retrospective slotting in of misaligned activities by staff that are uncomfortable declining a member country's request.

Having said all that, it should be recognised that the SP was an important step in filtering down on what the Secretariat can do, in recognition that 'the pie is limited, it must be carefully divided and the Secretariat cannot be all things to all people'. Nor is it necessarily a bad thing for divisions to have carefully thought through their activities and reframed them in a results-based logical manner.

Prior to the current SP, a lot more time was spent developing projects and getting approvals on project design and budgets, since there were a large number of very small projects. Respondents confirmed that the consolidation of small projects into larger ones has brought about a more efficient design, planning and review processes. It has simplified reporting requirements, too, by reducing the number of projects that must be reported upon at corporate level. According to some technical staff, it has also 'freed' them of the so-called 'administrative burdens' for which they were previously responsible as a project manager, and enabled them to focus on the technical work that they master better than management.

Another benefit of the SP is that it has framed the Secretariat's work and given it clarity. It has also given the departments flexibility to internally move funds around when detailed programming needs change. The breadth of each 'project' can facilitate spontaneous partnerships or leveraging. After all, flexibility is key to being able to take advantage of such opportunities as they arise and to adapt to evolving needs on the ground.

3.2.2 Recommendations for design of future Strategic Plans

1. Given budget constraints, there should be a 'real' reduction in the number of work areas – or else the scope of each IO should be reduced. If resources remain the same or decline in the next SP period, it should be reflected by an actual decline in the number of work areas in the delivery plan.

2. Focus efforts on determining the organisation's programming priorities in the next four years (and beyond), to maximise impact while optimising limited resources. Target future programming on areas of comparative advantages and unique value proposition (UVP) – such as small states, democracy and governance, policy and legal reform, judiciary/rule of law, and human rights.

Revise the SOs to be more focused and to represent changes to which the Secretariat can feasibly contribute as well as observe – so it can report them during the SP period.

3. Ensure that the SRF clearly articulates the various levels of change that the Secretariat can realistically bring about; and that Strategic Outcomes (impact) proposed are sufficiently attributable to the Secretariat's work. The SDGs and priorities of the Commonwealth Charter then represent the super-goal or ultimate impact of the Secretariat's work – even at a higher level than SOs.

4. Revise the term used to describe the impact-level results (SOs), to more clearly distinguish the desired impact from the intended outcomes, e.g., they could be called 'Goals' to avoid the impression that they refer to the same level of result as the IOs. Likewise, correctly label groups of various projects as 'programmes', and develop corresponding 'programme' key performance indicators (KPIs).

5. Ensure that all projects/initiatives fit within the SP and can be reported against it going forward. Discourage approval of member country requests that do not align with the agreed priorities.

6. Ensure that IOs are consistent in their size and scope, across the various outcome pillars, by eliminating some and consolidating others. Formulate new IOs which better articulate the Secretariat's Unique Selling Proposition (USP) and comparative advantages, and provide measurable medium-term results against which to track and report results using routine monitoring and periodic review.[5] New IOs could focus on the immediate results from the main products and services that the Secretariat offers, relevant to multiple SOs – i.e., policy reform, legislative drafting/legal frameworks, trade agreements, election observation, needs assessments, advocacy work, the Secretariat role of convening important large meetings, establishment of knowledge hubs or funds (for climate financing) etc.

7. Clarify responsibility, ownership and accountability for each Enabling Outcome, and:

– Make 'Gender' an Enabling Outcome, to more effectively mainstream it.

– Retain 'Technical Assistance' as cross-cutting theme, yet consider highlighting partnerships separately.

– Harmonise Divisional projects/PDDs for advocacy into one global advocacy strategy, with corresponding subprojects, under which reporting on ministerial meetings may be captured.

– Showcase more explicitly the convening work that is a major aspect of the Secretariat's mandate; and make visible the important consensus-building role of the Secretariat by including it as an Enabling Outcome in the new SP.

– Develop a Knowledge Management Framework and system to consolidate and strengthen this important area and clarify accountabilities and budget. Consider broadening the portfolio to encompass evaluation and learning, which are critical elements of RBM.

– Emphasise 'Innovation' as another important cross-cutting theme.

8. In terms of Internal Outcomes:

– Refine the category of Financial and non-financial Corporate Services, which encompasses a wide range of different types of services, to facilitate corporate service reporting to the SP.

– Ensure greater prominence to Communication and Visibility in the next SP.

– Quality and Results might be more appropriate as an Enabling Outcome, given the important link of RBM, Planning and ME&R with Knowledge Management.

9. Look to combine multiple member country requests into a single response, such as regional training in response to several capacity development requests from various countries. This would not necessarily entail limiting the requests, but having a different approach to the Request Register.

Box 3.4 Good practice – PCP's role in ensuring alignment

The entity selected as Primary Contact Point (PCP) is the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), whose mandate is to continuously monitor the performance of the economy and ensure the country is meeting its development goals. It is charged with liaising between national agencies and the Secretariat (as well as other donors) to prepare country requests. As such, any support that is being requested on behalf of Jamaica comes through it. PIOJ sends out calls for proposals to various agencies, sending out a template with each and reviews them (ensuring that the requests submitted are in line with priorities of the country, of the donor and of the SDGs). Once projects/programmes are in implementation mode, the requisite officers at the Secretariat (and other donors) then work with the governmental implementing agencies directly. Yet PIOJ Unit should be kept in the loop, as it reports on results nationally and is charged with tracking the SDGs.

3.3 Alignment to broader initiatives

Key message: The SP aligns with the priorities of the Commonwealth Charter, can be mapped to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and reflects commitments such as the Paris Agreement and other global agendas.

3.3.1 Internal

Eminent Persons Group recommendations

The EPG report of 2011 made 106 recommendations, most of which have been adopted by Heads of Government, either as drafted or with agreed modifications. The first of these was to have a Charter, and it was a big success for all then 53 member countries to agree this.

Some recommendations were adopted at CHOGM and Heads asked that these be rolled into the SP. A Taskforce of Foreign Ministers was established to address this, and 46 recommendations were adopted and – where possible – reflected in the SP. For instance, it was envisaged that:

- the ability of the Secretariat to support the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) in its enlarged and positively oriented mandate would be enhanced;

- the Technical Assistance services provided to member governments and sharing of knowledge would be strengthened;

- the Secretariat would work in closer partnership with the Commonwealth Foundation and accredited Commonwealth organisations; and

- several one-off mandates would be delivered.

Table E1 in *Annex E* presents the extent to which those recommendations were effectively embedded in the SP.

Commonwealth Charter

SPED has mapped the current SP against the Charter of the Commonwealth. The Charter worked to balance the 'two sides of the house' with 16 paragraphs – eight on democracy/governance and eight on development; and the SP generally mirrors this, with two outcome pillars (SOs 1–2) pertaining to democracy and governance and four (SOs 3–6) pertaining to development. Specifically, *Table E2* in *Annex E* visually shows how the outcomes in the SP align with the priorities articulated in the chapters of the Charter.

The three most obvious gaps in the SP pertain to: 1- *International Peace and Security; 2- Freedom of Expression*; and 3- *Role of Civil Society.* References to *food, shelter* and certain aspects of *environmental protection* are also missing from the SP. The omission of agriculture and food security was also noted by one staff member, who passionately felt it should have been retained. In all other priority areas of the Charter, there are connections to varying degrees. Some of the most notable ones are described below.

The SP is underpinned by the shared values and principles of member countries and 'concern for the vulnerable', as set out in the Charter of the Commonwealth; this is most obvious in the IOs concerning gender and youth, as well as small and vulnerable states. Regarding the 'gender mainstreaming' priority articulated in the SP, the Charter clearly states how 'gender equality and women's empowerment are essential components of human development and basic human rights. The advancement of women's rights and the education of girls are critical preconditions for effective and sustainable development'.

Public Institutions (SO2) is the most far-reaching pillar of the SP, covering four of the Charter's priority areas. This includes issues such as human rights, rule of law and justice, independence of the judiciary (and separation between the other branches of government), and good governance in general. Democracy is also highly prominent in both documents, with support for fair and transparent elections representing the Secretariat's core work during both this and previous SPs.

In accordance with the Charter's affirmation of the Commonwealth as a recognised intergovernmental champion of small states – advocating for their special needs, providing policy advice on political, economic and social development issues, and delivering Technical Assistance – the SP features a Strategic Outcome uniquely dedicated to strengthened resilience of small states and vulnerable states.

In terms of cross-cutting themes, the Enabling Outcomes refer to 'technical assistance, referral and partnership mechanisms' and 'knowledge management', directly reflecting the Charter's emphasis on consultation and the sharing of experience, practical co-operation, friendship and networks for co-operation.

Finally, the core Commonwealth principles of consensus and common action, mutual respect, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, legitimacy and responsiveness – all articulated in the Charter – share commonalities with the main principles of RBM, which are: accountability, national ownership and inclusiveness.[6] This is relevant, because RBM is a top priority of the Secretariat and the SP itself is the main tool for applying it.

3.3.2   External

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Commonwealth contributed considerably to the development of SDGs at a high political level through a commission established by Ban Ki-Moon, which featured four to six members from the Commonwealth. This process was reflected at the level of education ministers – a ministerial subset that met three times and gave recommendations on moving forward from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In addition, small states governments met and shared their priorities at the United Nations' General Assembly in 2014/15 via a statement from the Commonwealth.

Both the Commonwealth Charter and the SP are also aligned with the global development goals. While the previous SP responded to the MDGs, the current one contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Given that the SDGs were launched halfway through the SP period, the SP itself was not explicitly designed to align with the SDGs. Yet there is a specific IO that directly speaks to the post-MDG agenda, namely: #5.2 – *Commonwealth principles and values advanced in global development and financing decisions (e.g. G20 and post-2015 MDG framework)*.

The Secretariat cannot, and should not, try to cover all 169 targets of the SDGs. Rather, there is a need to identify specific targets that the Secretariat will support its member countries to attain; specifically there is a need to identify what pieces of work the Secretariat can do that will help member countries address many SDGs. One such area is gender, given its cross-cutting nature.

Gender

The wording in the SP in relation to the IO of gender equality is in line with the SDGs and other international, regional and national commitments and treaties relating to gender equality and women's rights.[7] It also reflects to some extent the concern of inadequate progress towards gender equality under the MDGs and subsequent increased focus in the SDGs when the SP describes how, while... 'efforts have been made in the past... there is recognition that the Secretariat should do more to renew and deepen practice'.

The Strategic Plan states that: 'The Secretariat is aiming at making significant progress in the new Plan period to achieve gender equality in the diverse

areas of its work' (SP, 18). However, this ambition is not reflected in the results framework in which the targets of the number of countries achieving the indicators for 2017 are just two and four; lower than all other targets in the SP. This low expectation is at odds with gender equality targets of most member countries and international and regional treaties. It is also at odds with the international aspirations of the SDGs, which clearly describe how 'the SDGs can only be successful if women are completely integrated into each and every goal' (Goal 5: Gender equality).

Gender (in)equality is embedded in all other SDGs – for example, lack of *clean water and sanitation* (Goal 6) and lack of *affordable and clean energy* (Goal 7) impact more severely on women than on men. Inequality in systems and structures leave women at the bottom of the pile when it comes to *decent work and employment* (G8) and *industry and trade*, including international trade agreements (G9). Likewise, lack of access to justice, political processes and the impact of climate change all impact differently on women and men. If their different needs and concerns are not analyzed and taken account of, both in-house activities and support to member country governments can inadvertently reinforce existing inequalities.

SPED has conducted a retrospective mapping of the existing SP against the SDGs; and this mapping will be used to develop the next SP. The present evaluation documented further specific examples of direct linkages between the sampled projects and the SDGs, namely:

- **Democratic institutions (IO #1.3) and National Human Rights Institutions (IO #2.1):** There is an obvious connection between SDG #16 – which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels – and the Secretariat's projects working to strengthen democratic institutions (under IO #1.3) and to establish or strengthen NHRIs (under IO #2.1).

- **Health frameworks (IO #3.1):** The merging of health and education within the Social Development pillar of the current SP reflects the shift from vertical interventions (e.g., HIV, Malaria etc.) promoted by the MDGs to a more holistic and integrated approach

(e.g., health systems) required for meeting the SDGs. According to staff working on the national health frameworks project, refocusing of the health work in this way was useful and aligned with what the member countries were wanting, as well as with the global goals.

- **Trade and competitiveness (IO #5.1) and debt management (IO #5.3):** SDG #8 is to 'promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all'. With aid for trade assistance being a large component of this goal, the Secretariat's project supporting trade and competitiveness in the Commonwealth is of notable importance. Debt management work (under IO #5.3) is also highly relevant to this SDG, as well as to SDG #1 – no poverty.

- **Climate financing (IO #6.3):** Several respondents expressed that the Secretariat's project on climate finance frameworks directly supports the sanitation, affordable clean water, sustainable cities and climate action that are part of SDG #16. By improving access to financing for climate change mitigation, this project should play an important role in helping countries meet their goals. In fact, it is difficult to think about any of the SDGs without funding climate action, since climate change is a cross-cutting issue that affects all areas and inaction will likely lead to other goals being undermined. Of course, it is also of critical relevance to the Paris Agreement.

- **Technical assistance, referrals and partnership mechanisms (Enabling Outcome #A2):** As an enabling outcome, this project is cross-cutting and relevant to all SDGs. Yet it is especially applicable to SDG #17 – 'Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development'. Through such mechanisms, the Secretariat aims to respond flexibly to member countries' needs and capacity building priorities.

One staff member pointed out that the ongoing discussion of the Secretariat on SDG alignment relates only to the extent to which the SP aligns with the SDG goals/targets, rather than the global agenda.

21st session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21)

For the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21), the Secretariat facilitated its first agreement in Malta pre-Paris, with the Maltese president speaking for 52 countries[8] on what was already agreed. This strengthened the voice of the Commonwealth in the Paris Agreement, in a process that was driven by the Secretariat, albeit as a 'by-product' of another process.

'Group of 20' international forum (G20)

The Commonwealth–G20 relationship has grown as the Commonwealth has served as a vehicle for bringing the perspectives of developing countries to the G20, and also for suggesting practical solutions to difficult development challenges. This engagement was rooted in the 2009 CHOGM mandate, which urged the Commonwealth to work with the G20 and to strengthen the voice and representation of developing countries in international economic decision-making and norm setting. The Secretariat has expanded the G20 discussions through a partnership with la Francophonie and facilitated an annual Commonwealth G20-Francophonie Dialogue.

3.3.3 Recommendations for improved alignment/linkages

1. The task at hand for this evaluation was to examine the alignment of the SP to key global frameworks. Although the findings highlighted a few global priorities that were not explicitly captured in the SP, these should not necessarily be interpreted as gaps or omissions that the Secretariat must fill. In fact, it is not advisable that the Secretariat try to cover everything – with limited resources and specific comparative advantages, it must prioritise those areas where it can make the most difference and where other organisations are not already working.

2. While the discussion above mainly concerns the extent to which the Secretariat's SP aligns with the goals/targets of global results frameworks, it is important to recognise that it is equally, if not more, important for the Secretariat to ensure that its work adheres to the *principles and commitments* that have been agreed as part of the global agenda, as these are longer-term and fundamental to any kind

of work that an organisation takes on. With this in mind, it is probably more worthwhile for the Secretariat to be examining *how things are being done* beyond this initial mapping of results frameworks. For instance, common themes of the SDGs, the Paris Agreement and G20 initiatives are local ownership, collaborative partnerships and sustainability. It would also be in the Secretariat's interest to consider how its various projects align with member countries' national development plans, which partnerships would be most effective and mutually beneficial, and to what extent all sustainability is embedded in all its interventions.

3.4 Organisational reform and restructuring

Key message: Organisational restructuring that is integrated with the SP development process poses fewer risks for implementation. Decoupling the responsibilities of restructuring from the strategic planning created space for Heads of divisions/sections/units to lobby based on self-preservation and resulted in inconsistency in the staffing plan.

3.4.1 Assessment of the reorganisation process

At the time the new SP was introduced, there was recognition that Secretariat capability was not fit for purpose for delivering the SOs. Drivers for change included the relatively small implementation budget, which was under increasing pressure, and the need to modernise the Secretariat. The existing organisational structure was heavy on bureaucracy and manual processes, and it was characterised by a large ratio of administrative/support staff to project/technical staff. To address this, an external consultant was hired to advise on organisational restructuring in 2013. The aim of this reform was to ensure that the organigram reflected the necessary human resources to deliver the new SP, making the staffing plan leaner. The restructuring consisted of the following:

Box 3.5 Good practice case study: Rule of Law (ROL) departmental reform

The ROL Director formed a committee including agencies and member countries, with regional representation and including other agencies carrying out work in field. The Director placed importance on a bottom-up process of restructuring, involving the members to determine priorities for how the directorate should work. Michael Kirby (the eminent judge and EPG member) was invited to chair this process and to facilitate member countries' understanding of the challenges and the rationale for review and sunsetting. The membership was interested and engaged, and the final package was adopted by law ministers in 2011.

- Some units were eliminated or collapsed into single teams, in reflection of the SP commitment to consolidate. For example, the size of the health and education portfolio was reduced, by integrating the two into a single area.

- Other units were expanded in order to reflect new priorities of the SP.

- Across the board, there were large cuts to support functions, i.e. finance, human resources (HR), IT, event management, travel, administration, etc.

- The Gender Section was placed in the Office of the Secretary-General, putting gender into a cross-cutting, overarching position within the organisation.

- From 2013-14, a Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES) was implemented with redeployment of 32 staff members and subsequent departures of 56 support grade staff over a three-month period.

The main strength of this exercise was that it forced the Secretariat to be more aggressive with prioritisation and respond to areas representing the organisation's unique offer. In addition, it mainstreamed the use of resources by centralising administrative functions such as travel, event management and HR, so that each department no longer needed its own executive support team.

However, quite a few respondents felt that 'the transition was not done properly'. According to interviews, the extensive restructuring ended up as a largely political exercise. With some exceptions,[9] the process was reportedly akin to 'moving deckchairs on the Titanic' in that there was a tendency to mix superficial change with

the real change that was needed. The evaluation identified the following weaknesses and limitations in the process:

1. The process to map the SP to resource allocation, so that funding commitments accompanied strategic commitments, was flawed. Although there was budget allocation at the IO level for the first time, two different sets of people with different interests were charged with the strategic and budgeting processes. The rationalisation criteria were not made explicit, so that commitments could be effectively prioritised to reflect available funding for delivery. This approach required several rounds of proposals to get everyone to recognise that the different outcome areas had to relate to the others and be balanced – it was reportedly a very challenging exercise.

2. Although much of the decision-making about staff redundancies was delegated to the Directors, there was little true ownership of the SOs at the Director level or influence over the programming priorities. Clear leadership decisions on staffing were lacking and the organisational reform consultant was not given the authority to make executive decisions to reconcile the various opinions. The process of structural reform was allegedly driven by staff, who lobbied High Commissioners in a process which was explained as 'turkeys don't vote for Christmas'. The ensuing reform of each Division followed a different process, with no standard outcome, consistency in Divisional structure or project sizes (see Box 3.5 for an example of how one Unit approached the process). This legacy reportedly impacts the effectiveness of ministerial meetings to the present day.

3. The organisational reform efforts were reportedly used to dismantle toxic or dysfunctional divisions/units and address the balance of national representation (e.g., dismantling divisions perceived as powerful or regionally focused) more so than to ensure alignment of the organisational structure with the SP's agreed programming priorities.

4. The restructuring was done without any new information and communication technology (ICT) systems having been commissioned in advance. The technology and process solutions that would have justified the reduction in head count were not delivered (i.e., to replace the redundant staff positions with ICT systems that would automate their functions and make work efficient for those who remained). In order to gain efficiencies and ensure effectiveness of the scaled-down organisational structure that was being introduced, there was a critical need to review the Secretariat's ICT infrastructure and consider upgrades. These were supposed to be part of the change exercise, but they never moved ahead because of budget limitations.

5. The downsizing exercise was also largely based on voluntary redundancy (for support staff only), so that some of the best people left. The downsizing and redeployment processes involved extensive negotiation and dialogue, which proved expensive and time consuming.

3.4.2 Alignment of the organisational structure to the SP and its role in supporting SP delivery

On one hand, the organisational structure has supported SP implementation in several ways. The new structure is leaner and more cost-efficient, with less duplication of roles and reduced 'overhead' positions. At the highest level, the structure aligns well with the organisation's three main service areas: Corporate, Political and Development – each overseen by a different Deputy Secretary-General (DSG). As such, it worked to reconcile the 'two sides of the house'. The cross-cutting nature of TAU – both in practice in terms of cross-divisional collaboration, as well as on paper as an Enabling Outcome in the SP – is a great strength. During the previous SP period, the organisation had technical experts that were regionally focused, which was

helpful for addressing the unique contexts of each region; yet those positions were not particularly cost-efficient, so they were eliminated. Fortunately, the policy advisers that remain are regionally focused, and this appears to be quite beneficial for the member countries.

On the other hand, there are also various aspects that have hindered SP delivery or served to restrict the results of the process, leading one respondent to state that 'the SP has almost become a victim of the organisation's own transformation'. The restructuring exercise ultimately was based more on fitting the existing structure into the new SP, rather than thinking about how to resource the organisation in order to deliver the new SP. The latter approach would have moved the organisation toward what it needed to become. Instead, a 'culture of entitlement' reportedly dominated; and the compromises and consensus needed were watered down. The resulting structure remains quite hierarchical and top-heavy, with extensive layers of divisions, units, sections and subsections, and disparities in team size and role type (e.g., the Trade Division alone has three Heads of section). This is reported to seriously affect the planning and delivery of ministerial meetings, and may contribute to the many challenges that were identified with accountability and delegation.

Furthermore, from an external perspective, it is difficult to visually make the link between the organisational chart and the SP, making the accountabilities for results in the various areas quite obscure. For instance, the SP does not visually show how the SOs are grouped into Politics/Democracy versus Development (each overseen by a different DSG/Division), nor is it clear which Outcomes (Enabling or Internal, or both) are under the mandate of the DSG-Corporate Services and his Division.

In conclusion, the organisational restructuring was a missed opportunity for those who wished the SP to be mapped against a new structure. While the SP is results-based, the underlying organisation is not so much.

3.4.3 Effectiveness of cross-divisional collaboration and synergies

In principle, the restructuring should have facilitated inter-departmental/thematic collaboration and communication due to shared administrative support and reduced resources. The size of the

Box 3.6 Divisional co-operation in The Bahamas

The Bahamas identified the need to revise the existing Cooperatives Act at a time when the new Credit Union Bill was being drafted with Secretariat support. Yet there was no mechanism within the Secretariat for linking these two projects to optimise resources and maximise impact. The projects were handled by two different divisions, with no co-ordination between them. The lack of internal co-ordination of Secretariat assistance in the country resulted in lost opportunities and had a direct bearing on the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the projects.

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staff body was reduced,[10] which should also make it easier to get to know one's colleagues. Yet effective cross-divisional working is rare. The willingness and interest seems to exist, as expressed by the following quote: 'Where we have managed to undertake joint projects, staff have been collegial and professional'. Yet the hierarchical structure and organisational culture seem not to foster such working.

The 2016 Meta-Evaluation found that the need for the Secretariat to strengthen co-ordination, both internally and externally, came up repeatedly across the entire period studied. Many of the recommendations are focused on inter-Divisional/Unit co-ordination (Evaluation of Commonwealth Secretariat Assistance to Member States in Legislative Drafting, 2015; End Term Review of Gender Plan of Action, 2016.)

A common finding of this evaluation was that the organisational culture within the Secretariat reflected territorial approaches, rather than collegiality and trust. In other words: 'Silo-ing is the nature of how things are – this has not disappeared with the new SP'. An example of an area that has suffered from a lack of inter-disciplinary working is the small states pillar – while work is shared across divisions, there is no sense of shared results. As a respondent explained, 'Only marginal progress has been made in each Division to allow each person to see where they fit into the grand design'. Regular Senior Management Group (SMG) meetings across divisions would help to reduce silos, but it was notable that these do not currently take place. Sharing budgets would be a way to overcome this, yet there are still challenges as to how two divisions report on a joint project. There is a need to look critically at projects at inception and see how other thematic areas can complement.

Within the evaluation process, clear examples were shared of 'in-fighting' between and within Divisions and Units, for example over incoming member country requests, project funding and leadership. All Divisions have a tension in the split between policy/governance work and technical assistance for development – this means they engage in complementary work that can lead to competition in house. Likewise, a nationally based High Commission reported that staff briefing against each other had prompted a disengagement from the Secretariat.

This 'crossed arms mentality' could originate from the technical specialisation of engagement or from 15 years of restructuring and temporary contracts. Furthermore, the Secretariat is a multicultural organisation, in which people work in very different ways. Many staff members are civil servants from member countries, with experience of a hierarchical working culture. In addition, most personnel have high-level expertise in one narrow technical area, but little wider management experience.

Some staff members have found collaboration also to be a challenge due to scarce resources, the staff travel burden and stretched capacity just to deliver the core outcomes. Plus, remuneration and benefits are not oriented to reward team work. For example, collaboration is not targeted under Performance Management Plans (PMPs). Nor is there a clear link between individual performance and PDDs or departmental objectives. Should these incentives be introduced, cross-pollination across such a diverse range of areas of engagement could become a massive strength for the Secretariat in future.

It seems that this culture of siloed working also trickles down to the Secretariat's engagement with member countries and the various consultants

and LTEs working in each country. Although some individuals are vaguely aware of other Secretariat-supported initiatives in-country, for the most part, country-level stakeholders are not familiar with the Secretariat's other projects. Nor are they encouraged to collaborate with other project teams: most reported instances of communication between LTEs based in the same city/country had been personal initiatives rather than arrangements facilitated by the Secretariat. One LTE expressed this issue in saying, 'It would be useful to have a more formal mechanism that allows for cross-fertilisation'. For the moment, this seems to be limited to the organisation of high-level political meetings (CHOGMs, ministerial meetings) and to new initiatives such as the Climate Finance Access Hub and the Commonwealth Education Hub. This represents a real missed opportunity for cross-sectoral synergies, as well as for knowledge sharing and lesson learning, which are important roles for any Secretariat.

Despite the lack of systematic cross-divisional collaboration, it does, of course, happen – mostly because of individual initiatives and largely dependent upon the Section Head's support. Here are a few examples of good collaboration identified in this evaluation:

- YTH and Trade teams collaborated on capacity building of senior officials in youth entrepreneurship.

- YTH and HRU jointly developed a human rights manual.

- The Gender Unit worked with HRU and ROL to design and fund the development of Judicial Bench Books.

- SPED and the Finance team regularly collaborate with regards to PMIS and CODA, the Secretariat's financial software system. Specifically, they share joint information with the divisions, to avoid having them to consult SPED and Finance separately. Joint technical briefs for the Board of Governors have also made communication easier.

- The SPED/Planning team sits in on the Performance Scans that the DSG-Economic and Social Development does with his Division.

- Meetings of Heads of State and ministers are conducive to experience sharing across a range of sectors and topics. CHOGMs and ministerial meetings, for instance, provide such opportunities.

3.4.4 Recommendations for future organisational reform and restructuring

1. Ensure strong leadership and executive decision-making for prioritisation of outcome/project areas and staffing decisions within the Secretariat; and conduct a short, sharp restructuring process. Allow each department to provide input and suggestions on the revised organigram, but retain final decisions for the person/team charged with co-ordinating the SP design and budgeting processes.

2. Put in place an incentives system to encourage interdisciplinary working and break down some of the organisational siloes that persist, e.g., within Performance Management Plans. Introduce improved mechanisms for sharing budgets, implement regular cross-divisional SMG meetings, and seize opportunities for integration and synergies between similar areas, such as youth and social development (education/health/gender) and economic growth/trade and small states' resilience.

3. Conduct a thorough review of all projects in-country at the outset of all future Secretariat engagement with member countries, with an eye to opportunities for collaborative co-ordination, to enhance the effectiveness of assistance and maximise its impact. Pilot joint project monitoring by advisers to minimise project operational costs, increase efficiency and improve regular communications – e.g., nominate one Division to act as 'country representative' for a member country. Consider a mechanism of Country Strategies for either all member countries or those identified as priority countries during the next SP period.

4. Findings: Effectiveness and Efficiency

4.1 Results-based management (RBM) system

Key message: Institutionalising RBM requires ownership at all levels of the organisation. In the context of reputational risk and funding cuts, it is essential that the Secretariat seeks ways to showcase its RBM efforts and culture to external stakeholders.

4.1.1 International trends in RBM

Over the last few decades, there has been a growing interest in **results** among multilateral development institutions, governments and other international development actors. With increasing amounts of private sector development and enhanced recognition of the many factors outside of project control, RBM is confronting growing complexity. There is a rising concern that LogFrames and Theories of Change are insufficient and not flexible enough for dealing with complex and ever-changing real-life situations, especially in terms of systemic market change, the political realm, and the effects of climate change on the environment. Organisations that are serious about RBM are looking at flexible approaches to it that feature 'adapted management' to be dynamic and relevant.

An important trend in RBM, pursued actively by DFID, the World Bank and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) among others, is a greater focus on monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). RBM should always have a feedback loop, whereby results-informed learning should be applied to project improvement and development of new strategies. In addition, respondents specialising in RBM stated that there are increasing efforts to roll back from 'naïve approaches' to value for money and promote innovative use of ICT.[11] On a related note, a Meta-Evaluation[12] commissioned by the Secretariat in 2016 confirmed that the Secretariat has yet to establish an organisational definition of 'value for money'. The environment for securing funding has become more competitive for development agencies, driven by increasing high expectations and standards. 'Member countries are wanting more done with less nowadays', explained one senior staff member.

Despite the concentrated RBM drive of the Secretariat, evaluation findings suggest that the Secretariat is still behind the curve in keeping track with these fast-evolving trends. RBM is advancing in organisations that take it seriously, resource it properly and keep abreast of emerging agendas. Despite good strides in the right direction, the results culture at the Secretariat is still immature and that while there has been an accumulation of knowledge and improved capabilities, significant effort is still needed to entrench RBM practices and maintain the momentum for this change in the organisation.

4.1.2 Impetus and efforts to strengthen RBM at the Secretariat

The introduction of a formal RBM system at the Secretariat was initiated due to pressure from the Board. The evaluation of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Assistance (CFTC) in 2008 was a pivotal driver, as the report included strong recommendations that RBM be strengthened. Members, in particular those that fund the Secretariat most heavily, were questioning its relevance and the value it brings, and were increasingly demanding demonstration of accountability and results. Board meeting minutes show a direct relationship between the countries protesting the lack of Secretariat RBM practice and their level of financial contributions. The perception that the Commonwealth was not demonstrating results led to a drop in CFTC funding, reinforcing the need for contributors to show constituents that their investment is making a difference. During the same time period, a series of trainings on programme evaluation promoted a results-culture and contributed to the growing internal interest in RBM at the Secretariat.

Figure 4.1 Key advances made in strengthening RBM at the Secretariat

2004: Leadership-level announcement/policy statement on RBM
Set the direction and sparked interest/awareness among the staff

2011: RBM/planning adviser hired charged with rolling out the RBM approach.
Demonstrated the organisation's committment to RBM by putting resources into it

2011–12: Basic training RBM for a large group of advisers and programme officers
Introduced RBM to key staff and helped to identify additional capacity development needs

2013: Intensive training in PMIS for a large number of staff across the organisation
Built an understanding of RBM and skills in practical use of PMIS for project design, among 123 personnel

2013: Developed a corporate RBM strategy
A Framework and Action Plan provided direction and guidance, particularly for SPED, to operationalise RBM

2013/14: Developed the Strategic Plan and corresponding SRF and Project Design Documents (PDDs)
RBM thinking became more strategic and the work became more focused

2015: Established the RBM team within SPED
Made additional staff available to further RBM

2015: Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the SP
Led to revision of the SP and SRF, as well as organisational restructuring and reform to streamline processes

2015: Second wave of major training
Capacity development

2015–16: Development and continous enhancements of various RBM tools
Developed various tools, guidance and technical notes to support CD, including move from ARTEMIS to PMIS

During the SP implementation period, significant advances were made in rolling out RBM within the organisation. Prior to 2013, there were very few RBM practices or systems in place. Since then, the focus has been on shifting mentalities from inputs/activities and an exclusive focus on delivery, towards outputs/outcomes and the need for monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Large numbers[13] of staff have been trained in RBM, and new staff members are oriented to RBM during induction sessions. Extensive effort was put into establishing the systems and tools to foster RBM, including: development of the 2013/14–2016/17 Strategic Plan and corresponding Strategic Results Framework; development of the organisation-wide RBM Framework; transformation of the Activity Results Tracking and Expenditure Management System (ARTEMIS) into a more holistic project planning, monitoring and reporting system, called PMIS; and improved work-planning, planning and corporate reporting.

Figure 4.1 shows the most notable actions taken to strengthen RBM within the organisation, most of which took place during the period of the current SP.

Respondents indicated that the chronology of the RBM rollout summarised in Figure 4.1 was not ideal. The intensive staff trainings in RBM took place **before** an overall RBM strategy and tools were introduced, thus rendering the training rather theoretical and leaving some participants frustrated and confused about how to apply the learning. Nevertheless, staff and consultants involved in the new RBM system generally agree that significant advances have been made, despite quite challenging circumstances.

4.1.3　Key achievements and challenges

In 2015, the two independent audits by KPMG – one on 'Strategic and Business Planning' and one on 'Project Outcomes and Delivery' – both gave the Secretariat ratings of 'substantial assurance',[14] noting the organisation's good practices and achievements in monitoring, evaluation, reporting and PMIS development.

The SPED/RBM team deems that the organisation is currently positioned between *Level 3 – System & Capacity Development* and *Level 4 – Implementation* in the Maturity Model shown in Figure 4.2 (extracted from the Secretariat's RBM Framework). The evaluation findings confirm that impression. The

focus of the last couple of years has been on raising awareness and securing buy-in for an RBM approach, establishing the foundations of the RBM system, and developing staff capacity and tools. The Secretariat is now starting to see RBM being applied, with some divisions/projects doing this more comprehensively than others. The target is to enter the Implementation stage soon, with RBM activities becoming systematic and routine. 'The preparedness is there', said a SPED staff member. 'It's the activation of it that remains'.

Level 1 – Awareness Raising and Adoption

Awareness and ownership:

The main challenge to date has been securing a common understanding and buy-in of RBM by the organisation as a whole, especially among leadership and senior management. Respondents agreed that, during the SP period, SPED has done its best to instil an RBM culture, which is a prerequisite for improved capacity and subsequent implementation of the system. However, this culture was difficult to sustain, given that more than 60 per cent of the staff initially trained in RBM left during the organisational restructuring.

Another major challenge from the onset was the lack of understanding of the role of leadership in operationalising RBM at the top levels of the organisation. Given the strategic nature of RBM, it is critical that senior staff champion it; yet RBM was seen by the leadership as a technical issue, not a strategic one. It was only after the bulk of staff were conversant in RBM and starting to use RBM tools that higher-level management realised its importance and began to request specific capacity building support. Eventually, the higher levels of the organisation did buy into RBM, but very late in the journey – and change in staffing was a key factor. Uptake of the RBM approach has proven easier

among new staff coming from other organisations, which tend to have institutionalised RBM deeper than the Secretariat.

There are still some staff members whose understanding is limited to the perception that RBM is synonymous with PMIS. However, the Secretariat has made huge advances in shifting staff thinking to look at the bigger picture and the 'reason why they do the work they do'. Now the challenge is to maintain buy-in and keep the momentum going to institutionalise RBM. The RBM team report that following a high-energy, high-change period, there has been a lull. 'We are not losing ground, but we are not gaining either. We do need something else to re-gain interest'. The next SP will provide an important opportunity for catalysing the necessary momentum; and its development and implementation have the potential to stimulate new attention and energy for RBM.

Key staff members recognise that the biggest driver for securing buy-in and ownership for an RBM system is the **need for** and **utility of** the information collected and reported. 'Right now, the driver for the data is still mainly the Board, represented by SPED. Until that becomes every individual manager's requirement, we can't go far', said one respondent. 'We need consistent messaging from Senior Management and the leadership to make the right kinds of demands. That will go a long way!', said another.

Roles, responsibilities and accountability: The evaluation found that there is still a need for greater leadership and accountability vis-a-vis RBM within each of the divisions/units/sections – so that the processes and results are fully owned by the project/technical staff and RBM is not just seen as something that belongs to SPED. In this regard, accountability remains a major issue to be tackled going forward. The extent to which RBM is applied depends primarily on personal initiative, leading to variable use across different divisions and sections.

Figure 4.2 The Commonwealth Secretariat's RBM Maturity Model

The Commonwealth Secretariat RBM Maturity Model											
Recognition		Engagement		Capacity		Utilisation		Responsiveness		Institutionalisation	
Sensitisation	Level 1 — Awareness raising and adoption	Planning	Level 2 — Strategy development	Activation	Level 3 — System and capacity development	Application	Level 4 — Implementation	Measurement and learning	Level 5 — Generating and using results information	Integration into culture	Level 1 — Managing for results

Box 4.1 Operationalisation of RBM

The DSG-Social and Economic Development has operationalised RBM by conducting six-monthly Performance Scans with his division and by requiring all projects to be evaluated at the end of the SP period. Others may have a different approach or diverging ideas about how RBM can be realised. So how RMB trickles down from DSGs to Directors differs between divisions. It all ultimately depends on the Head of Section/Unit to do something, so there's a lot of variation.

Staff respondent

For it to become institutionalised, staff at all levels (including DSGs and Division Heads) must be held accountable for systematically applying the agreed processes and tools for RBM functions, such as work-planning, budgeting, monitoring, reporting, learning and data use.

The key to operationalisation of RBM lies in the accountabilities for driving it forward. Yet a corporate-wide approach has not yet been proposed for reviewing and analysing performance and financial information or for documenting and applying learning toward project improvements. While a Performance Rating System has been developed, it has not been formally tabled with senior management. The organisation has also not made RBM training (including PMIS orientation) mandatory for all staff – and SPED does not have the authority to require Directors to send their teams. Sometimes planned trainings have to be cancelled due to low attendance.

The other issue pertains to responsibility for project management. In the previous system, where specific member country requests and small initiatives were considered 'projects', the technical personnel were responsible for the project management of their set of activities. Now that these projects have been grouped into much larger 'projects' or programmes, the project management responsibility has been raised up to the level of the Section Head, who is charged with overseeing the IO. On one hand, this has pleased many of those technical staff because it frees them of the so-called 'extra administrative work' on top of their 'core work' and allows them to focus on their speciality areas; however, on the other hand, it places the responsibility for extensive, detailed project management (and ministerial meetings) on a single, senior-level person (themselves often a technical specialist rather than experienced

manager.) Consequently, the day-to-day work of planning, monitoring and reporting often falls to the Operations Officers (a new position in the structure). As such, the roles, responsibilities and ultimate accountability for project management, performance and financial monitoring, and reporting at the various levels of a 'project', are not always clear. On person summed up a common view in saying, 'Nobody owns the projects that are not performing well in the system'.

Level 2 – Strategy Development

Results-based Strategic Plan:

The Secretariat's main accomplishment in RBM is the development of the current SP, which brought with it new practices and inculcated buy-in for RBM. This results-based plan reflected the push from member countries towards RBM and away from the 'scatter-gun approach'. The corresponding SRF is also an important deliverable, as it gives people a better sense of what they are working towards and helps them determine the extent to which they have achieved those aims. Another key milestone was the introduction of an RBM Framework. This document provides an overview of what RBM means to the Secretariat, along with practical models and timelines for its rollout.

Results-focused work-planning and budgeting:

SPED has introduced a standard way of carrying out results-based project design, planning and monitoring by creating a set of templates and basic processes for using them. In 2015, guidelines were produced on annual work-planning and budgeting. The associated templates have been enhanced within the SP period, PDD template, which includes appendices for the:

1. Project Logical Framework Matrix

2. Implementation Schedule

3. Task Schedule

4. Project Monitoring Plan

5. Detailed Budget

Information sessions were organised for members of the Board of Governors, for the SMG and for general staff as part of the build-up, for ongoing information sharing and as a means of soliciting feedback for further improvements. There has also been co-operation between SPED and the Finance and Management Information Section (FMIS) from the beginning of the work-planning and budgeting process to its finalisation, with the budget presented to the Board of Governors. One respondent stated that the involvement of divisions and the DSGs in results-focused work-planning was helpful for aligning annual work plans with the priorities of the Secretariat.

Recent improvements to the budgeting system include:

• disaggregation of funding sources, so that budgets and expenditures can be tracked by type of fund (e.g., ComSec, CFTC, CYP, Extra-Budgetary Resources [EBR] and reserves/designated funds); and

• modification of the budget template to include historical information on expenditures, to show spending trends over the last two years.

Budgeting for the SP is currently results-based to a certain extent, in that divisions/units are generally formed around accountability to IOs – this is a good practice which does not happen in many other organisations. With more time to prepare subsequent SPs, the Secretariat could be able to undertake the important analysis required for truly budgeting by result.

To date, financial analysis has been limited to examining expenses against budget and making projections (by Division, project and type of fund). With budgeting now considered a key part of the performance rating system, there is a need to define what a 'satisfactory' spending rate is for each quarter. Going forward, the aim is to strengthen the interpretation of burn rates and/or thresholds for performance, as well as establish a system for flagging consistent underspending.

Results-based reporting:

Prior to 2014, corporate-level reporting was not carried out in a common or consistent way because there was no framework against which to report. Once the SP was accepted, reporting on results was also instituted as a new practice in the organisation. This was done through the introduction of templates that provide a clear structure and show trends against key performance indicators (KPIs) for the IOs. The six-monthly and annual corporate reports (which are prepared by SPED's Planning team, mostly from information extracted from PMIS) have been well received by the Board of Governors. The addition of quantitative indicators 'enables us to give a sense of scale on what we are doing rather than pockets of narrative results', said one respondent; and it addresses the Board's feedback and requests for more verifiable measures.

There is a substantial improvement in the quality of corporate reporting over the SP period. Initial SP biannual reports were dense and inaccessible, with few diagrams and detailed input-based reporting, which made it challenging to get a sense of achievement across the SP as a whole. While biannual reports aggregate reporting by results area, annual reports are broken down by project and by country, giving a more comprehensive picture. Incrementally reporting became more succinct, analytical and results-focused. By 2015/16, a methodology to systematically track and validate

Box 4.2 Good practice case study of investment in thorough PDD development

HRU was a pilot case under the new SP roll-out. With full support from SPED, they took 6-7 months to develop a PPD, using a consultant who acted as a critical friend and provided technical expertise as the programme was developed.

Box 4.3 Good practice/success story: Reporting system

TAU has a systematic process for collecting information on inputs and outputs, which requires a commitment to reporting from the long-term expert (LTE), the line manager in the member country and TAU itself. This makes the LTE accountable to their ToRs and to delivering results against the pre-agreed objectives. In order to develop member country appetite to show how Secretariat support has created impact, reporting is managed as part of a process that first develops relationships and creates buy-in through an inception period. TAU is charged with a long-standing function of the Secretariat and has worked hard to take on the findings of previous evaluations (such as that of the Strategic Gap Filling Programme of the Secretary-General) in order to deliver better results and report more effectively.

evidence behind reported results was introduced, reflections on the priority areas of gender mainstreaming and partnerships were included, and a Performance Rating System was annexed.

However, it was pointed out that the current RBM/reporting system precludes the Secretariat's ability to report at a country level – which means it is not possible to provide an overview of activities and results by country unless PMIS and related project design tools are updated to enable country-level disaggregation. Both member countries and staff have expressed the need to have more visibility of the Secretariat's work at the country level. This initiative is apparently in the pipeline and should remain a top priority.

The Technical Assistance Unit (TAU) is commended for having a well-established and documented reporting process, with standardised templates which report against targets – a unique example of such standardisation within the Secretariat (Box 4.3). However, LTEs expressed a view that current templates do not allow for adequate qualitative descriptions, reporting on unintended outcomes/ additional work beyond the terms of reference (ToR). The templates favour reporting of quantitative data against set indicators, and a more flexible space to explain the numbers, tell success stories, or share descriptive lessons would add value.

Human and financial resources:

A key component of this phase of RBM rollout is resourcing. RBM human resources were expanded, with the creation of an RBM Unit and the hiring of an RBM officer, as well as a team of developers for

the PMIS. Yet available funding remains inadequate, both for robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and for delivery of all that is set forth in the SP.

During the year that was spent in negotiations with the Board to review and modify the draft SP, budgets were frozen. Post SP-approval, funding levels have been decreasing as member countries and partners reduce their pledges towards CFTC. Units reported that six months after SP development, they were told to cut their budget by 25 per cent, and the next year there was a further 25 per cent budget cut. When the SP was designed, projects were allocated a certain budget; but following a reduction in member contributions, the process to recalibrate SP ambition and priorities to reflect the new funding reality was not very evident. In addition, there has been a recruitment freeze since February 2016, with budgets awarded on a three-monthly basis since July 2016. Units are therefore expected to do more with fewer staff, and staffing vacancies hamper implementation.

If the organisation is to continue to make advances in RBM, additional resources may be needed – to support evaluation in particular. This will be particularly important for the learning aspect of the RBM approach to be reinforced. The evaluation has revealed that the Secretariat could improve its opportunities for funding by: (1) strengthening RBM; and (2) improving internal governance, i.e. HR and financial management (see Section 4.3.2). Weaknesses in these areas have been cited by partners, such as the European Commission (EC), as reasons for the Secretariat's ineligibility for certain types of funds – and they have signalled that this should be a major priority for the Secretariat if it is seeking to remain competitive.

Box 4.4 Strengths and weaknesses of PMIS, as cited by the respondents

Strengths:

It is structured around the SP and incorporates the indicators of the SRF (to which projects are linked), so it provides a 'big-picture', consolidated view of all the work the Secretariat is doing which falls within the SP.

- It is a highly comprehensive system. It contains sections on: funding commitments, budgets and expenditures by IO and by type of fund; process monitoring, with quarterly satisfaction ratings to indicate the extent to which project delivery is on track; reporting on outputs and outcome indicators, as well as 'impact stories'; risk management; archives of Back-to-Office Reports (BTORs); and more.

- While the SRF indicators for SOs, IOs, Enabling Outcomes and Internal Outcomes are unchangeable, the project teams have the flexibility to define the indicators for short-term outcomes and outputs. SPED works with divisions to develop the indicators, if needed.

- SPED can generate consolidated reports for the Board from it.

Weaknesses:

- The system is not particularly user-friendly. It has many layers of screens, requiring the user to click deep within the site to locate what they are seeking. This is rendered even more complicated than necessary due to unclear or illogical titles on the sections/windows.

- Because CODA and PMIS record budgets and expenditures at different levels, activity-level expenditure data must be pulled over from CODA and manually matched up ('reconciled') against the appropriate activity budget in PMIS. Reconciliations can be time-consuming, causing some staff/projects to fall behind.

- Some project managers and Operations Officers feel the system is more appropriate for corporate-level ME&R than actual project management, because it doesn't break the information down to a useful level for those implementing and managing the work (i.e., to enable financial and performance monitoring at the output and activity levels).

- The 'reporting' function is not yet fully operational, so users cannot extract all of the information they might want/need (e.g., Talking Points for senior managers when they visit a member country; searches of BTORs); only a six-monthly progress report on results can be generated at this time.

- There is limited quality assurance and meaningful review of the inputted data.

- It does not capture any work that falls outside the SP, such as the Commonwealth Fund or ministerial meetings.

Level 3 – System and Capacity Development

Mid Term Review and Strategic Plan revision exercise:

After two years of testing the new system and implementing the projects, personnel were given an opportunity to revise and streamline the SP to reflect experience and the findings of the MTR. Once approved at corporate level, Intermediate Outcome (IO) indicators were fixed, but short-term outcome indicators and below were subject to revision by project teams as required. This safeguarded the approved strategic direction of the SP, while offering flexibility to refine approaches at

the operational level. This exercise was a positive step in the right direction and reflected flexibility within the RBM system.

Programme Management Information System

The Secretariat has also come a long way since the ARTEMIS system, which was in place during the eight or nine years prior to the current SP period. This software was used in a skeletal way for project planning, but it was not particularly relevant given that most projects were essentially small activities (e.g., responses to member country requests for a training, scoping study or LTEs). The transition from ARTEMIS to the more robust PMIS provided more useful infrastructure for planning larger projects. A lot of human and financial resources have been invested into PMIS, to build it around the new SP, orient staff in its use, expand its functionality and incorporate user feedback.

From SPED's point of view, PMIS is a comprehensive system and, if used correctly, it can further improve RBM. However, within the Democracy and Development pillars of work (especially the former), there is a lot of reporting fatigue and a common perception that PMIS has been over-engineered for such a small organisation. Respondents questioned the amount of time that must be spent on reporting-related administration versus technical delivery of projects. One person echoed the sentiments of many in saying, 'PMIS is a convoluted system, designed from a monitoring perspective, not a user perspective'. While it was reported that the system is getting better, it is still considered demanding, bureaucratic and not especially user-friendly.

PMIS may require some simplification, but fortunately it is a customisable system and the Secretariat retains a team of developers to iron out issues. The RBM team attested that it is committed to undergoing a continual process to make PMIS user-friendly and attuned to Secretariat operations. This includes offering formal or informal training[15] and coaching to teams, as requested. Yet this evaluation confirms that minor ongoing adjustments and staff orientation sessions may not be enough; rather, a full review of the system should be undertaken, which considers users' needs and results in a validated plan to modify the system to reflect the revised specifications. (This will likely result in a reduction/simplification of the system, rather than an expansion of its functions.) This cannot be done in isolation from the review of the

Secretariat's financial system (CODA) and efforts to consider enterprise-wide software for project management, ME&R, ICT, HR, finance and other corporate-wide information.

Staff guidance, orientation and training:

In addition to training in PMIS, a few solutions have been introduced to secure and maintain staff capacity in the SP and RBM in general:

1. The SP forms part of the organisational induction process, which all staff should attend

2. The SP is part of the RBM induction course, which all staff should attend[16]

3. The Secretariat has commissioned the creation of an online training course on RBM for staff

Although RBM induction is in theory available to corporate staff, some respondents expressed a perception that it is only project/technical staff that are eligible/prioritised for participation.

To provide reference material to staff, SPED has introduced guidelines for annual work-planning, reporting, revising the PDD and conducting annual reviews. In addition, in the immediate pipeline is the development of *Project Management Guidelines*, with many modules drafted covering each aspect of the Strategic and Project Management cycle. By incorporating the 'How To' aspects into each module, these guidelines should clarify expectations and step-by-step procedures for delivery, thus helping to standardise policies and practices across the organisation. The RBM team also recognises that the organisation must expand its suite of tools for conducting M&E.

Utility and appropriation of tools:

Going forward, it will be important for SPED to ensure that RBM tools and approaches demonstrate value to the staff. This means designing the system specifically with the user's experience and input in mind, and making sure that it serves *both* the organisation's internal needs (e.g., for effective and efficient project planning, management, monitoring, learning and informed decision-making) and external demands (e.g., reports to the Board of Governors, communications with member countries and partners, information for the general public). Currently, the general impression in-house is that RBM is geared more towards corporate-level reporting and that the main

client is the Board. Many advisers and technical staff consider RBM to be little more than 'extra administrative work' – a view captured well by this quote: 'The admin systems run us, rather than us running the systems'.

4.1.4 The way forward, toward implementation and institutionalisation

Staff capacity development

Although high staff turnover during the reform period saw more than 60 per cent of staff trained in RBM exiting the Secretariat, many staff members now have a generally good understanding of RBM – especially the newer ones who come from other organisations where RBM has been institutionalised for some time. Yet the 2016 Meta-Evaluation indicated that ongoing findings from evaluations have a consistent message: that the Secretariat should continue to invest sufficient time and resources in building staff capacity on RBM philosophy and principles.

The interviews from this evaluation found that staff could benefit from reinforcement to clarify certain topics and shift mentalities vis-à-vis M&E and results. In particular, this includes:

- **Understanding of the basic concepts underlying the hierarchy of results, theory of change and attribution:** The evaluation revealed that some staff still believe that the RBM and LogFrames are not compatible with the kind of work the Secretariat does, especially in policy and legislation, because impacts can only be observed in the far long term and because there are so many external factors outside of the Secretariat's control. They are concerned about the ability to set realistic objectives given the mandate of the organisation.

- **Reticence to fully embrace RBM and the 'learning' element:** Staff still struggle with the balance between learning and accountability. Some want more space to make mistakes and learn from them, while others believe that the focus should be on accountability – as the organisation must be accountable to those providing project funding. Currently, the latter dominates at the expense of the former, with the learning aspect being weak to non-existent. The RBM team believes that the

organisation must be willing to change the way it works to be more adaptive and introduce a learning culture. 'Ignoring these trends will be detrimental to us'.

- **View that ME&R is not part of their core work/responsibilities:** Some staff, especially the technical ones (Advisers, project officers do not consider ME&R to be a part of their 'core work', which is technical assistance and delivery. Embedding RBM in everything the organisation does requires a shift in mentality, so that all staff members accept it as an important component of their job rather than seeing it as 'extra' work.

Quality assurance

A significant gap in the current structure is an entity charged with quality assurance, coherence and consistency. Prior to the current SP period, a robust Project Management and Referral Unit (PMRU) existed to conduct quality assurance of CFTC projects. This Unit was eliminated in the restructuring and the subsequent role in DSG-Corporate was never filled. This gap was noted by several staff during the evaluation interviews, indicating that there is still a need for the quality assurance function – both for quality project design (including gender mainstreaming) and for quality ME&R.

Quality assurance of project design and work-planning:

PDDs are approved through a distinct process of development, appraisal, approval and recording on PMIS and CODA, the financial/accounting software. During the previous SP period, the former PMRU reviewed project documents to establish that cross-cutting areas were present in the design; and it called for strengthened submission as required. Without a formal structure or position allocated to this task, quality is reportedly suffering, as expressed by a staff respondent hereafter: 'We see lots of things of low quality. Nobody is policing quality to the standard needed. PMIS checks are not in-depth enough. There are no additional checks in the system. Very low quality things get passed through the system. We just pass the money through'.

SPED strives to build quality assurance into project appraisal via checklists, but it does not have a formal mandate for quality checks. At the beginning of

the year, each Division/Unit/office uses a work-plan template to prioritise and allocate finances to their outputs, short-term outcomes, Intermediate Outcomes and Strategic Outcomes. Funding is then approved on that basis. Once the budgets are approved, divisions apportion the approved budgets to projects (laid out in PDDs). Yet, it was communicated to the evaluators that an additional quality assurance layer between the development of work plans and PDDs by the divisions and their submission to SPED would add value. The involvement of the RBM team at an earlier stage in the design process would be preferable, as would a standardised quality assurance tool.

Historically, projects and their work plans have been designed at start of a SP period, with a rushed timeline in order to have funds disbursed for implementation. This has not allowed time for adequate quality assurance or reinforced capacity in RBM. Looking forward, this is a window to build the capacity of managers and teams around the ten criteria in the work plan template/guidance, to make sure they used as they are intended. At present, SPED pulls out good planning examples and uses them for training purposes.

In the absence of a clear quality assurance mandate, SPED has been trying to push quality assurance responsibility back to DSGs and playing more of a support role. The rationale for this is that, 'Senior management must demand certain standards/ qualities. The message from the top will have a huge impact'. With all of this in mind, the evaluation findings suggest that, while both divisions and SPED should be responsible for ensuring quality (to different degrees and focusing on different elements), there would be a lot of value in having a separate Unit or individual that is assigned a formal quality assurance role. This would not duplicate the efforts of the divisions and SPED, rather it would complement them and introduce a higher level of standardisation in the organisation.

Quality assurance of project monitoring and reporting:

A very low share of monitoring plans – approximately 30 per cent, according to SPED staff interviewed – meet the standard required. Quality assurance is part of the monitoring role of one staff member within the SPED/Planning team. The main mechanism used is informal feedback on the quality of reporting and project results frameworks. The PRS is a mechanism envisaged for the future. It would formalise quality assurance

through a 'traffic light' system to gauge the quality of design, risk, output/outcome progress, budget implementation etc.

One key recommendation from the KPMG audit was that the Secretariat must meet minimum standards on evidence-check – currently one piece of evidence per result is what is reported. SPED is confident that there is evidence to back up results cited in the Annual Results Reports (ARRs) and other reports. Yet a good professional level of evidence is not yet collected consistently and by all teams.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

SPED's Planning team has noted the need to strengthen the measurement of shorter-term results, as the current low-level indicators are not all capturing information that is meaningful or at the appropriate level. The RBM team also acknowledges that 'There's something missing. The way we are trying to do it doesn't work for every Division/project'. A lot of things are difficult to monitor and there is huge uncertainty about whether/if results (at the IO and SO levels) will emerge, especially within the timeframe of a single SP. Careful reformulation of the results chain and corresponding indicators in the next SP and SRF should address this, in addition to further orientation and training of staff on key RBM concepts such as the theory of change, impact pathways and attribution.

LTEs and consultants echoed these concerns, and specific examples of challenges in capturing meaningful information on results were shared. Here are a couple:

- Measuring meaningful results from routine judicial work is quite difficult, as it is an ongoing, operational function. For example, it was noted that the reduction in backlog – which is a common output indicator used by the Secretariat – is not a true reflection of the nature of change. An analysis of the backlog may reveal more in terms of quality of proceedings, not just disposal of cases, or the fact that there are more factors leading to the backlog.

- According to staff and CFTC experts working in policy reform and legislative drafting, the outcomes of such work are also challenging to report upon given the long lag time between the drafting of a law or policy and its adoption.

Because of these challenges, some respondents believed that RBM was not applicable to the type of work that the Secretariat supports – especially with regards to the Secretariat function of convening of high-level meetings, as well as its support of democracy and governance work. One respondent who expressed this view said that the Secretariat's work could only produce 'intermediate results', since much of the work is at a policy or institution-building level.

This view indicates that there may be a rather limited understanding of the concept of RBM and related Theories of Change or Results Chains. It suggests that many respondents consider 'results' to only refer to 'impact' – and they do not necessarily recognise that there are different levels of results, starting with immediate outputs, which lead to medium-term outcomes, which in turn contribute to longer-term impacts. Reporting on impact of policy/governance work is a common challenge for secretariat-type organisations; however, with careful attention, it is possible to measure contribution and attribution.

Nevertheless, these comments do have merit and should be considered in the future iterations of the SP, because the organisational results framework should clearly articulate the various levels of change that the Secretariat can realistically bring about – and the SOs (impact) proposed should be sufficiently attributable to the Secretariat's work. This may require more than just revising low-level indicators; rather, it may need to involve revising the results chain within the SP/SRF.

Evaluation and learning

Previously, evaluation – as a separate department – was not well integrated into the planning and monitoring functions within the organisation. Now, the Evaluation, Planning and RBM teams are all housed within SPED and work closely together. This is an improvement; however, this evaluation revealed that more needs to happen to fully integrate the evaluation function with the planning, monitoring and reporting, so that the 'learning' part of the RBM cycle can take place adequately. This does not mean losing the critical 'independence' of the evaluation function, rather 'integration' refers to reinforced feedback loops to learn from findings and apply lessons to improved programming, as well as to the introduction of more project reviews and evaluative monitoring (discussed below).

Comments from respondents were substantiated by the findings of the 2016 Meta-Evaluation. The core finding of this study is that the Secretariat is not yet utilising evaluations at a strategic level for decision-making and organisational learning, and does not have the institutional learning mechanisms in place to support this. The lack of clarity around intended use and primary users of the evaluations, and the lack of meaningful and consistent engagement with those users, in addition to the lack of systematic follow-up mechanisms, significantly impede the uptake of evaluation findings and recommendations. It was stated that the Evaluation Section is not adequately resourced, either in terms of financial or human capacity. Key recommendations from the Meta-Evaluation included the following:

- define and clarify roles in relation to the evaluation function by finalising the draft Evaluation Policy; and revising and strengthening the Evaluation Guidelines;

- relocate and elevate the Evaluation Section to an independent Unit in the organisation; and

- establish peer review committees to oversee evaluations.

The Meta-Evaluation of 2016 also recommended that the Secretariat develop an evaluation knowledge management strategy and system. Yet recommendations for improvement of the Secretariat's knowledge management have been made as far back as 2003, by the *Universalia Study on the Commonwealth Secretariat's Follow-Up and Utilisation of Evaluation Findings*. Due to the Secretariat's rotation policy, along with numerous restructures, robust knowledge management systems are crucial; yet knowledge management systems at the Secretariat continue to be weak and fragmented. Consequently, at the most basic level of documentation, evaluation findings and recommendations are not systematically stored, nor easily accessible for utilisation. Moving beyond this to a more dynamic understanding of knowledge management, such as communities of practice and online learning, will require even greater investment.

Box 4.5 Good practice/success story: RBM approaches to project design and monitoring

The DSG-Social and Economic Development requires that projects being designed by his division undergo a peer review before he will approve them: both SPED and Divisional staff have to provide feedback on the design before he will carry out the final review and move the project forward. At the start of the SP period, each project manager presented the project to others; and the DSG set the standard by probing with strategic questions about results. That was the first time in the organisation that this process had been conducted, with everyone engaged. Through the comments – both critical and positive – staff learned from one another and this promoted collaboration.

This DSG also conducts six-monthly Performance Scans within his division, whereby division staff defend their PDDs. At first, staff could be defensive, but many now appreciate this as a learning process. These systematic management conversations can help promote evidence-based decision-making.

Even in the internal synthesis evaluation of 2013, it was recognised that: 'On a strategic, macro-organisational level, there is a breakdown between evaluation function and both strategic planning and programmatic work. The fact that the same evaluation recommendations migrate from one decade to another, and across several studies, indicates a definite disconnect in the feedback loop'.

Interviews from this evaluation also confirm that, at present, there is no mechanism for organisational learning, and M&E seems to be viewed as a dichotomy rather than a continuum. The hierarchical nature of the organisation works to inhibit lesson learning, because the organisational culture creates obstacles to open discussions and collaboration vertically among staff at various levels and horizontally across departments. It is recognised that a new approach of learning and improving, rather than just reporting, is called for. 'There's a need to test the assumptions, not just document what is being done', said a consultant. Staff are said to be less interested in measuring what they are doing, than showcasing the results. The Secretariat has not yet committed adequate resources to M&E, especially not to ex-post evaluation. Yet, the evaluation function and department are critical, as the only Unit that maintains a longer view beyond the project lifecycle.

The Secretariat can only be relevant if it can show that what it did five years ago is producing fruit. However, to do that might require greater investment in the capacity of the Evaluation team and in conducting evaluations or in project-level M&E plans to follow up after support. While there is a role for external evaluations (especially impact/outcome evaluations that are planned well in advance as part of project design), the Secretariat should do more 'evaluative monitoring', to avoid the reliance on external evaluations. Results-informed reviews must be institutionalised, ideally not less than two per year in every 'programme' area, at project level and Divisional level. There needs to be an understanding with the implementing partners – who should be self-monitoring to the greatest extent possible – that the Secretariat will be coming back 'X' years later to see what the outcomes of the work have been. Asking and discussing important questions about outcomes attained (intended or not) is a fundamental driver of learning. The teams, not just SPED, must own these processes.

The RBM team recognises that the organisation must expand its suite of tools for how it conducts M&E. Going forward, one of the priorities is to examine how evaluation can be used to share findings/lessons and promote learning.

4.1.5 Recommendations for further strengthening RBM

1. Build on investment in the online course on RBM and gender mainstreaming for staff, by examining other effective approaches to continuous professional development that represent good value for money. An expanded e-learning package, combined with a strong new-staff induction package and periodic

in-house face-to-face trainings/refreshers, will likely be needed on an ongoing basis to keep staff up-to-date on evolving RBM trends and enhanced organisational tools and processes. Make RBM training (including PMIS orientation) mandatory for technical and corporate staff, and not just at the discretion of each Director/Head.

2. Conduct a formal review of PMIS in collaboration with users, and develop a plan to improve the capacity of the system to serve staff needs. Commission a working group of project managers and Operations Officers to inform the development of the SP. Make the interface more user-friendly by eliminating the need for manual reconciliation of financial information, reducing the number of levels/windows, and making page/tab Headings more self-explanatory. Limit ME&R requirements to the most essential and meaningful quantitative and qualitative data collection. Extend PMIS systemic capacity to enable country-level disaggregation.

3. The organisation must have a system that responds to corporate demands for strategic, high-level information, while at the same time providing more detailed information that supports operations and delivery. Mandatory data requirements on SOs and OI can exist alongside optional tools for lower levels. Introduce complementary tools and processes for lower-level planning, management and monitoring to address the recurring problem with underspend and the Secretariat's financial management weaknesses, as perceived by the EU and perhaps other partners.

4. Enhance TAU-reporting templates[17] to allow for qualitative description and reporting on unintended outcomes or work beyond the ToRs; and to explain numbers, tell success stories and share descriptive lessons.

5. Allocate formal responsibility for the quality assurance function within the organisation, which incorporates quality assurance of project design, context analysis and gender mainstreaming.

6. Prioritise organisational learning through strengthened linkages between evaluation and planning, monitoring and reporting. Introduce a policy/strategy and mechanism for organisational learning and commit adequate

resources to evaluation, especially ex-post impact evaluation. Pilot 'evaluative monitoring' via periodic results-informed reviews at the project level and the Divisional level, including for good practices for ministerial meetings, such as the peer review of PDDs and quarterly performance scans by divisions; these should be institutionalised so that all teams are systematically applying them.

4.2 Gender mainstreaming efforts

Key message: In order to respond to SDGs effectively and implement the aspirational commitment of the Secretariat to gender mainstreaming, gender will need to be better integrated into the SP.

4.2.1 Quality of gender mainstreaming in the Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan is underpinned by the shared values and principles of member countries and 'concern for the vulnerable', as set out in the Commonwealth Charter and the 2030 Agenda. Both the Charter and the SDGs clearly state how 'gender equality and women's empowerment are essential components of human development and basic human rights. The advancement of women's rights and the education of girls are critical preconditions for effective and sustainable development'. In addition, the SP document states that these will be mainstreamed into member countries' policies, frameworks and projects, as well as the Secretariat's projects.

However, there is no clear evidence of this integration within the visual overview of the SP. While the previous SP reportedly featured gender as a cross-cutting area, the current SP does not include gender among the Enabling Outcomes that support delivery of all SOs. Nor does it contain any references to gender differences or actions to increase gender equality within any of the SOs, apart from Social Development. The indicators at the Strategic Results Framework level are also gender blind. In effect, gender is not mainstreamed in the SP itself.

During the MTR, the Gender team recommended that gender be added as an Enabling Outcome. Instead – to address the recommendations of the MTR and particularly Canadian International

Development Agency's (now Global Affairs Canada) insistence that gender be mainstreamed – gender mainstreaming was added retrospectively to the current SP as a specific project within the Social Development pillar (SO3), and funding was attached to it. In the revised version of the SP, gender explicitly appears only within IO #3.3, which aims to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment. According to the interviewed staff, IO #3.3 primarily concerns gender-related leadership and economic empowerment (e.g., giving females a voice, ensuring equal rights); and IO #3.4 – Improved capacity building for social development – addresses the social aspects of gender, including domestic violence (e.g., healthy relationships, equitable gender roles, access to education and health services, etc.).

Given that the SP asserts that gender is mainstreamed, there appears to be a misunderstanding about what this means – or at the very least, there is a discrepancy between what is in paper and what is happening in practice. Mainstreaming gender should not be solely the responsibility of the Gender Section, as the work of all units impacts on women and men. There is a need to visibly assess the implications for and potential differential impacts of any action or project on women as well as men throughout the project cycle, and then act to close any gender gap to ensure that inequalities are not perpetuated. No action is entirely gender neutral, even at international level, whether in trade, political processes, economics etc.; therefore, in order to have a positive impact on gender equality, an awareness of these differentiated impacts is essential for all members of staff. Gender is not a separate theme that has to compete with other priorities, but should be core to all the work of the Secretariat and needs to be reflected as such.

Integration of gender as a key element in RBM:

The Impact Pathway chart of the RBM Framework (2015) puts gender at the core of results, with almost every section of each area of work suggesting that the nature of gender issues or gender responsiveness be measured. However, this is not reflected in the SRF of the SP, in which the only gender-aware indicators are the two relating to gender equality in SO3. Even these are pitched at a very low level of ambition.[18] This could be a consequence of the indicators being too broad and needing to be SMART and more carefully

formulated. While the indicators in the SP are set at quite a high level, this does not preclude them from being gender-responsive and ensuring that gender is visible within them.

Corporate monitoring and reporting is only required at the outcome level in the current SP – with PDDs and corresponding work plans being developed at the level of IOs, which mostly comprise large, multicountry programmes. For this reason, the Gender Section reports that it is difficult to carry out monitoring and reporting on gender indicators. It is reportedly a challenge to acquire enough detail to enable the analysis and inputs on cross-cutting issues like gender and to track changes in gender status, because all projects are not required to report on it. Moreover, the staff interviewed claim gender cannot be evaluated because there is no PDD or detailed LogFrame on which to base the evaluation. The Gender Results Framework that the Gender Section is developing now, in line with the new SP, aims to fulfil that purpose – i.e., that the organisation will have a consolidated results framework on gender, with all the Division/Unit activities that are gender mainstreamed and/or gender-specific projects captured within it, thereby, making it feasible for the organisation/SPED to track and report on those identified output and outcome indicators.

On a positive note, PMIS does require some basic information to be entered on gender within projects; and unless this information is entered, the software will not allow the user to progress to the next page. However, initially the required information was limited and somewhat tokenistic – asking whether the project was gender-specific or gender mainstreaming. More recently, the Gender Section worked with SPED to develop a set of more comprehensive questions, which are required for completion if mainstreaming is the option selected.

The Gender team also noted that it is not possible to generate a gender-specific report in PMIS that provides information on gender progress/ results across projects in the various SOs. It is possible to report on the activities and results of gender-specific projects (in #3.3 for instance), but the system does not capture information on gender mainstreaming. These findings echo the recommendation of the End Term Review of Gender Plan of Action, 2016: to adapt and use PMIS to capture the disaggregation of data for the regular monitoring and evaluation

Box 4.6 Good practice example on Gender

For trade technical assistance, gender is taken into account at each stage, from carrying out stakeholder consultations, to ensuring strategies consider issues such as access to employment for women. In support to Sierra Leone, for example, gender was a key consideration in including gari products (agri-processing) in their industry packaging action plan given that women growers, processors and some traders are disproportionately represented. Work is in progress to mainstream gender in the Secretariat's work on debt management and global finance advocacy.

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(accountability) of the implementation of post-2015 Commonwealth gender equality and women's empowerment strategies.

To help divisions with gender mainstreaming during project design, the Gender Section and SPED produced sample PDDs that provided guidance on ways for staff to integrate gender into their projects, noting two types of projects: gender mainstreaming and gender specific. These featured two case studies (one on anti-corruption and one on human rights). Yet no formal quality assurance mechanism exists to ensure that projects are designed with a cross-cutting element.

4.2.2 Gender mainstreaming in organisational strategies, structures and systems

Recent efforts made

While gender mainstreaming in the SP itself is weak, a greater commitment to it is evident in the organisation's strategies, structures and systems – notably, the first Gender Policy was produced by the Secretariat in 2012. This policy makes some strong aspirational statements about what the Secretariat will ensure, but there appears to be no accompanying strategy to guide implementation and explain how the organisation will operationalise these things in order for gender to be embedded in practice across the Secretariat. Such a clear, practical strategy or operational plan is particularly important now that the Gender Action Plan has come to an end.

Although there appears to be a strong commitment to gender mainstreaming at the senior management level, research carried out by Finnigan and Pemberton-Ford (2013/14) found that several members of the Senior Management Group (SMG) were 'not fully conversant with the relevance and

significance of Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Equality to the Secretariat's mandate, policies, operations and programmes'. They also noted that engagement with gender equality is patchy in the divisions. Despite the challenges and limitations, some projects have been able to integrate and report on their gender-related work. Many of them worked with the Gender team to implement those activities.

The Gender Section has produced a document entitled 'Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines for Project Planning', though this is of variable quality. Such guidelines are important, so it might be beneficial for the gender specialists to work with other departments to develop sector-specific documents that explain what the possible gender issues are within that context, how the work of the sector could better contribute to greater gender equality and the empowerment of women, and how to mainstream gender in that particular area of work and its projects.

The elevation of the Gender Section to the Office of the Secretary-General (as of the 2013 restructuring exercise) should put gender in a much stronger, more visible position within the organisation. Yet some respondents felt that this removed the Gender Section from day-to-day operations, contributing to a low profile.

Historically SPED pulled what it could from project reports to develop the organisational ARR sections on 'gender' (and 'partnerships'), but going forward the improved gender mainstreaming checklist should support more systematic reporting. Some SOs already provide useful detail on gender, as illustrated by SO5 – Development: Pan-Commonwealth in Box 4.6.

Other contributions are much more minimal. It is most likely that the level of detail in the reporting reflects the level of understanding of, and commitment to, gender mainstreaming by those involved and points to the need for greater capacity development of staff. To the external eye, the Youth SO is the most disappointing pillar, as neither the SP nor any subsequent documentation differentiates in any way between the needs of young women and those of young men; moreover, in the Annual Results Report 2015/16, it is the only SO that did not report on gender at all. YTH note that all their youth empowerment programming is carried out with an eye to gender equality and inclusion of young women, and gender equality a regular topic within youth forums and youth networks. Thus, the reporting of it may need to be looked at to capture good work being done.

The gender share of the LTEs provided by the CFTC was 71 per cent male and 29 per cent female. The Secretariat must do better in this regard. A good example, however, is the placing of Vanuatu's first-ever female judge in the Supreme Court. According to the interviews conducted, she and the female master of court (both funded by the Secretariat) have set a great example and provide unique role models for women in a country where they have little power and a low social status.

Effective, results-based project design requires the carrying out of a problem analysis and stakeholder analysis, but the Gender team report that this is not done routinely, especially analysis with a gender lens. In terms of the institutionalisation of gender into project design, there is currently no formal quality assurance to ensure that gender is embedded in projects, so gender review of PDDs is only dealt with as part of the data cleaning process for maintaining PMIS. Another challenge to operationalising gender mainstreaming is the siloed way of working within the organisation. Examples were given where the Gender team had attempted to initiate collaboration across divisions; however, the Head of Section was not willing to collaborate. This raises questions about the accountabilities in the organisation, as gender mainstreaming must be compulsory if it is going to be put into practice.

Successes/opportunities

As confirmed by the interviews with external stakeholders, the Secretariat is not the only organisation struggling with gender mainstreaming – it is a problematic area for most stakeholders working in the field of development and aid effectiveness. In practical terms, often all that changes is that data is disaggregated by gender and 'gender sensitivity' is just a tick box exercise during planning and reporting. By making gender a key component of monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems, there will be greater opportunities for creating synergies and generating lessons on how to practically address gender issues.

On a positive note, the IOs 3.3 and 3.4 are relatively easy to assess – especially compared to 'gender mainstreaming' – because: they are gender specific (with their own sets of project indicators, work plans and budgets); they mostly involve policy-level outputs such as gender equality/equity/mainstreaming policies, strategies, road maps etc.; and the work is done by consultants who are technical experts that report directly on the projects.

In addition, the Secretariat reportedly benefits from a strong working relationship between the Gender team and most other units, especially youth/sports, health/education, rule of law/ the Human Rights Unit, the Public Sector/Policy Unit and, to a certain extent, the Trade Division. There is especially scope for extensive collaboration on projects that have a strong gender component; for instance, most gender-focused projects concern human rights issues. Furthermore, the new Secretary-General is a champion for gender on a personal level, though she is of course obligated to communicate about all of the Secretariat's priority areas in a balanced way.

Capacity development of staff:

In previous plans, gender was externally focused with all efforts concentrated on meeting member country requests; there was no internal training of staff, nor did a corporate policy on gender exist. The current SP period, therefore, represents an improvement because gender is dealt with both externally and internally. The gender needs analysis conducted by Finnegan and Pemberton-Ford found understanding of gender mainstreaming to be variable. Other documentation and interviews indicate that a perception of it as a priority is even more variable. For some, there is a view that gender is just one of many priorities, while the understanding of others is limited to gender as counting both men and women.

Following the first ever online survey of staff in London, NYC and Geneva (in 2015) to assess their understanding of gender, a training plan was designed. Training was rolled out to staff (in YTH, the Economic Policy Division [EPD], the Political Affairs Division [POL] etc.) and stopped in mid-July 2015, when the new Head of Section arrived and wanted to reassess status. Since then, the Secretariat has commenced in developing an online gender course for staff. There has been some capacity development for member countries, but this mainly takes the form of projects managed by the Gender team (in collaboration with TAU, for technical experts).

It is felt by senior management of the Secretariat that the Gender Section will need to do more to build gender-mainstreaming capacity in the office. The aspiration is that each staff member should be able to perform a gender sensitisation/analysis. Achieving this will likely require additional investment, however, given the dual role of the Gender Section (i.e., responsible for gender mainstreaming in projects, as well as institutionalisation of gender internally) and its relatively limited human and financial resources for achieving such an ambition.

Recommendations for gender mainstreaming

1. Redouble efforts to operationalise gender mainstreaming within the organisation, supported by a clear operational plan to guide implementation and embed gender in programming in practice. Strengthen systems for ME&R and organisational learning on gender, and rollout mandatory basic gender training.

2. Emphasise gender as an Enabling Outcome in the SP, including both gender-specific indicators (for gender-focused projects) and integrated, gender-related indicators (for gender-mainstreaming across sectoral projects) in the SRF associated with the new SP.

3. Recruit advisory-level staff with both RBM and gender skills onto the Gender team, to serve as an interface between gender and divisions and to play a quality assurance role.

4.3 Operations in support of SP delivery

Key message: Silo working undermines the ability of the Secretariat to become more than the sum of its parts. The co-ordination between the TAU and programmatic areas delivery on the SO teams is a rare example of harmonised working across divisions. The Secretariat lacks visibility since communication of the SP to stakeholders is weak.

This section looks briefly at the performance of services and how they help or hinder delivery of the SP. Key services discussed by respondents were: HR, project and financial management, ICT and management information systems (MIS) and communications. These are discussed below.

4.3.1 Human resources

Effective delivery of the Strategic Plan requires a full complement of human resources, so respondents encouraged this evaluation to consider the average vacancy rate per division. With the recruitment freeze since February 2016, twenty-six per cent (26 per cent) of posts are currently vacant, and units are expected to do more with fewer staff.[19] Under the 2013 restructuring process, there was no mapping of staff members per outcome pillar/SO. During the organisational reform period, some units consisted of a single person for more than a year, with obvious consequences for SP implementation.

The Secretariat's fixed-term rotation policy for staff also has an impact on delivery, especially when a post becomes empty and may only be filled after a long interlude, not at all or by a temporarily contracted staff at a lower level. Out-going staff do not typically perform a hand-over, and many personnel take on 'acting' roles to fill vacant posts. One staff member cited a turnover of 20 people over two to three years in their Unit, while another changed business cards three times in three years as the organisational structure changed. Yet another explained that in each Unit, there are supposed to be nine positions, but four posts are vacant – with obvious implications for delivery. The

Box 4.7 Staff perception of bureaucracy

'If the Secretariat had decent, modern financial systems and efficient processes, the organisation would be much more effective. We need delegated authority levels than match responsibility. Currently, controls are frontloaded controls. We must sign off 20 times to spend a tiny budget or commit to a small purchase. There are masses of paperwork.'

Staff respondent

SP Monitoring Reports indicate that gaps in staffing have meant delays in achieving work plans across all divisions; and productivity has been impacted following departure of staff under the Voluntary Exit Strategy (VES) and compulsory redundancies.

This not only has a negative effect on implementation, but also on the Secretariat's reputation with contributing partners. The EC, for instance, expressed that it had experienced challenges with HR management on the Hubs and Spokes programme, with a high turnover of team leaders within the Secretariat and, at one point, a very long delay in filling the position – during which time no information was reportedly communicated about the status of recruitment.

In terms of HR management, there was a common observation among LTEs that the quality of services has notably declined in the last two years. They claimed that their contacts in HR used to be competent, efficient, systematic and timely; however, the reorganisation left the team smaller, with limited institutional memory, and it appears they still have not fully recovered.

'Two years ago, your salary was paid on time; you got a response to email in the same day; documents were properly laid out for you before you travelled; issues were dealt with quickly; etc. Now you have to write 16 emails to HR in order to get something done – you have to constantly track and follow-up issues. It seems that sometimes they forget we are out there.' – an LTE based in a member state

Other HR-related topics that respondents touched upon included the following:

- The speed at which LTEs were deployed (once the paperwork was eventually approved and the lengthy procurement processes were complete) was generally appreciated.

- The compensation package was deemed less competitive than the UN (although, a couple LTEs felt this attracts quality people who are

passionate and want to make a difference, rather than those solely motivated by money). Yet, the LTEs appreciated the other expatriate benefits.

4.3.2   Project and financial management

Project management

This evaluation revealed that the European Commission (EC), which funds the Hubs and Spokes programme, perceives the Secretariat be weak in project governance – including project and financial management, HR, communications, sustainability and exit planning. The EC respondent highly recommended that the Secretariat make concerted efforts to meet the requirements of the EU's '7 Pillars Assessment', which is a good governance/management audit required for accessing additional types of funding.

The 2015 evaluation of the Commonwealth Connects Programme (CCP) also demonstrated serious deficiencies regarding programme management oversight of the CCP mandate. The continuous debate on what the CCP's mandate stood for, the lack of a chair for more than 12 months, the lack of a financial sustainability plan for the programme itself, and the absence of sustainability mechanisms for the individual projects financed under the programme all reportedly debilitated the effectiveness of the CCP.

These issues are supported by the findings of the DFID 2011 Multilateral Aid Review (MAR), which gave the Secretariat an unsatisfactory score in financial resources management, stating that 'There is limited evidence for the pro-active management of poorly performing projects'. On a more positive note, the 2013 MAR Update indicated that the Secretariat had made 'reasonable progress' in financial management since 2011 and it upgraded the score from a 1 to a 2, stating that 'The accounts for the last two years have been unqualified, and a comprehensive programme of action has been

taken to address weaknesses. There have also been indications of a more pro-active approach to programme management'.

Financial management

Monitoring/accounting:

The project and financial management systems at the Secretariat seem to serve corporate needs more so than Divisional ones. Because corporate financial reporting only requires expenditure information at the level of output and above, the Secretariat's financial system, CODA, has not been set up to classify expenditures below output-level, and budgetary envelopes are issued at the levels of Intermediate Outcomes and Strategic Outcomes. As aforementioned, activity-level expenditure data must be pulled over from CODA and manually matched up ('reconciled') against the appropriate activity budget in PMIS, which is unnecessarily inefficient use of staff time and effort.

The overwhelming feedback from project/operations staff is that neither CODA nor PMIS provides enough detail on low-level budgets and actual expenditures for them to adequately manage their sub-projects and activities – especially in terms of budgeting and tracking spending. 'Being able to properly cost projects, outputs, activities and tasks requires lower-level planning and monitoring must be done at a level where it's credible', explained an Operations Officer. In addition, these systems reportedly don't line up with actual expenditures.

Consequently, project managers/Operations Officers – and even Divisional Directors – must create their own excel spreadsheets to carry out spending analysis and budget forecasts, and each department/project seems to use a different template. They enter data manually into PMIS to reconcile financial information that cannot be directly imported from CODA. This not only creates inefficiencies and inconsistent approaches to financial management across the organisation, but also increases the risk for human error in calculations.

Apparently, there has been a lot of internal debate about which level managers can/should manage their budgets. The rationale for requiring manual allocation of funds below outputs, according to SPED and the Finance Team, is that it might become burdensome and 'too intrusive' if the

systems track budgets and expenditures below the IO/project level. Another perceived problem with drilling down into a lot of detail within the SP is that there is a danger in being too prescriptive. This was articulated well by one respondent, who said, 'If you are too specific about detailed activities that are planned, it can be difficult to readjust them in the system when priorities change. At the top level (SO/IOs), it's fine, but the problem is with planning for outputs and activities'.

This issue not only concerns the classification of expenditures by accounting codes in CODA, or the link between CODA and PMIS; it also relates to the 'packaging' of the projects in the current SP and the corresponding PMIS – and the reality that what is called a 'project' in the SP/PMIS can actually be a large programme, with 'short-term outcomes' that multiple countries can buy into.

There is scope for a solution that satisfies both sides, by distinguishing between the data requirements at the strategic level and those at the operational/delivery level. The organisation must have a system that responds to corporate demands for strategic, high-level information, while at the same time providing more detailed information that supports operations and delivery. Expanding CODA and PMIS to enable lower-level planning and monitoring does not necessarily mean introducing new requirements – the mandatory data/reports on SOs and OI can exist alongside optional data/reports for lower levels.

Under-expenditure:

The Secretariat has a historical trend of under-spending – every year, expenditures are about £5-7 million under budget. In the first six months of 2015 alone, the Youth Division was £700k under-spent and the Trade Division was £1.2m under-spent. Under-expenditure during the SP period was attributable to a combination of operational, management and strategic factors, including the following:

- In 2014/15, the Secretariat's massive restructuring and reform process resulted in an increased vacancy rate. This placed pressure on the Secretariat's resources and constrained its capacity to deliver on planned projects, hence also to spend. This, as well as recruitment freezes, caused significant underspending on salary budgets.[20]

- In 2013/14, the corporate budget was not approved until August 2013 and on the condition that more detail would be produced in work plans to the Board in October 2013. This subsequently reduced annual expenditures and attainment of results by up to five months.

- Internally, new procedures, changes in work priorities, and staff gaps within policy divisions have all been key contributors to delays in project processing.

- Attrition of existing engagements and a reduction in the number of viable requests being received and developed into projects.

- Delayed pledges from member countries have also meant that project implementation being delayed, resulting in lower-than-expected financial performance.

'Now that we are finally at full delivery capacity, with strategic and operational plans in place, funding has been reduced! If we had done effective operational planning earlier, this might not have happened', said one respondent. This shows the important link between effective HR management, operational planning and financial management.

Funding levels / resource mobilisation

The Secretariat has three main funding sources: the 'ComSec' fund of members' assessed contributions, the CFTC and CYP. Reductions in available funds have been a major challenge for both strategic planning and delivery during this period. Most significant was the major decrease in funding in 2014–15, with CFTC voluntary contributions down by approximately £6 million. There was a £5.8 million (15 per cent) budget decrease between the two years. This was caused mainly by a two-year suspension of contributions by one member country (effective 2013/14) to its CFTC pledges. Yet the Secretariat has seen various partners reduce, or completely withdraw, funds in recent years.

Following DFID's 2011 MAR, DFID stopped core funding to four agencies and demanded urgent reforms from four others, including the Commonwealth Secretariat, which was formally warned that its funding was at risk unless it could improve performance in agreed areas. The Secretariat was subsequently placed in 'special measures', where progress was regularly monitored

and reviewed at the senior level. According to the 2016 Multilateral Development Review (MDR), the Secretariat continues to underperform.

'*Whilst the Commonwealth Secretariat has worked to sharpen its strategic focus and reduce the number of projects it manages, its commitment to delivering better value for money has not been demonstrated. Improvement is essential if DFID is to continue to fund the organisation's Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation. The Secretariat requires urgent organisational reform, Whilst the Co-operation Fund needs greater strategic focus. The Secretariat and the Fund are both unsustainably reliant on UK funds. DFID will link its future contribution to the CFTC to performance improvements in transparency, results measurement, human resource management, risk management, financial management and budget discipline. The Fund must also secure a more equitable burden share among its donors.*'

DFID MDR, December 2016

The evaluators had little access to Secretariat's major contributors; however, those interviewed expressed that perceptions of the Secretariat's weaknesses in project/financial management may be limiting its eligibility for certain other types of funds – notably, certain types of grants/trust funds from the EU. Apparently, many of the Hubs and Spokes programme's beneficiaries – such as the secretariats of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) – have graduated from the '7 Pillars Assessment', whereas the Commonwealth Secretariat has not yet done so. This suggests that the channelling of financial support through the Secretariat is becoming less necessary and valuable in the eyes of the EC.

Another way to secure confidence in potential donors is for the Secretariat to publish web-based data to the standards of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). According to the 2016 MDR, DFID expects all its partners to meet IATI standards as a minimum. Most agencies are now following this standard, and three more have committed to become compliant by the end of 2016; however, ten agencies remain uncommitted. The CIDT evaluators could not locate evidence that the Secretariat is among those who are following the standard or is committed to becoming compliant.

Box 4.8 Implications of Secretariat low visibility at the country level

Development partners/potential donors might well be interested in collaborating with and/or funding the Commonwealth Secretariat if they knew more about what the Secretariat does and its medium-/longer-term strategy. The New Zealand High Commission in Vanuatu, for instance, stated that it is not aware of the Secretariat's strategic priorities nor does it have a good understanding of the areas in which the Secretariat can offer value-added. The High Commission repeatedly emphasised the need for increased communication and a local presence, to be considered a key player in the country's strategic planning efforts: 'We are currently working with the Vanuatu government and other development partners on the country's next Strategic Development Plan, but the Commonwealth Secretariat doesn't figure in it at all', it said, citing the lack of local presence and communication on the Secretariat's own SP as the main inhibiting factors.

4.3.3   ICT and management information systems (MIS)

Staff based at the London office were generally satisfied with the level of IT support they received and acknowledged that an effective 'ticket' system is in place for internal help desk requests. The LTEs in the field experience less support, though that is understandable given their distance and the fact that they are not staff members nor do they work off the same server.

The main IT issue that was repeatedly raised in the interviews pertained to the enterprise management system – or lack thereof. When you eliminate large numbers of administrative/support staff, there is a requirement to digitalise and automate many of those central functions to fill the gaps. According to respondents directly involved in the organisational reform, the Secretariat needed a new enterprise-wide application that would bring together HR, finance and procurement, as well as ME&R data before the onsite support staff were reduced. A new system would deliver benefits in terms of productivity gains – for example, better digital communications to make use of virtual meetings/working.

This issue is directly related to the one mentioned in the financial management section (see Section 4.3.2), which recognised the need to streamline the onerous financial and procurement processes and low-authority levels that make transactions unnecessarily burdensome and time-consuming. There is clearly scope for improving linkages between PMIS and CODA, so that reconciliation happens automatically (rather than asking staff

to manually reconcile data), as well as between PMIS and other systems used for reporting on non-financial corporate services (as some teams currently generate reports from their own systems rather than using PMIS to report).

Apparently, SOCRATA is under consideration as an option for a comprehensive system, as it takes data from various sources and makes it more user-friendly; however, it is unclear how PMIS would fit into such a system. Regardless of which system or set of systems is ultimately used, it will be critical for the software developers to understand how the Secretariat works and ensure that the proposed solutions effectively facilitate implementation and related support.

4.3.4   Visibility and communications

Strategic communications

The evaluation findings indicate that the Secretariat appears not to always get credit for the breadth of good work it is doing. While human interest stories may be adequately published on the website, in brochures and other communications channels, other aspects of the Secretariat's work are less visible on the ground, in member countries. This was noted by interviews with High Commissions at country level and by various ministerial staff in member countries. It is also mentioned in the DFID MAR (2011), which stated that 'the Secretariat's work...lacks visibility'. The *End-Term Review of the Gender Plan of Action* had similar findings, noting that this plan was 'virtually invisible' to most people involved in gender work in Commonwealth member countries. The 2016 Meta-Evaluation offers a key

lesson that better promotion and communication of the Secretariat's work is needed, particularly in showcasing achievements and successes within the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth brand:

The Commonwealth as a whole reportedly faces an uphill struggle to be well-known in the UK and in many countries. Each Commonwealth organisation faces a challenge to create and maintain its own identity, and at the same time be a meaningful part of the Commonwealth family. While it is recognised that there needs to be a common coalescing around the Commonwealth brand, there is a lack of coherence, with each organisation talking from its own perspective, rather than 'singing from the same hymn-sheet' and championing the 'Commonwealth brand'. A Commonwealth organisation respondent stated that 'the EPG called for the Commonwealth to have a common brand, to leverage that towards a multiplier effect; but we have not seen this happening in concrete terms'.

In this regard, member countries articulate a perception that there is a lack of advocacy and information on what the Commonwealth is and what it does, especially as this evolves over time. There is little apparent connection between the different Commonwealth initiatives in-country and it can be a struggle to interpret the wide variety of initiatives bearing the Commonwealth name at the national level. member countries are confused as to the extent to which the Secretariat is co-ordinating these and to what extent it is the Secretariat's remit to safeguard the Commonwealth brand.

Awareness of the Secretariat's strategic priorities – to align requests and co-ordinate responses:

Most member country stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation were vaguely aware of the Secretariat Strategic Plan, but had never actually seen it – including the PCPs. While it may not be necessary for partners to have detailed knowledge of the SP itself, they should be aware of the Secretariat's programming priorities and current strategies – to co-ordinate development/aid efforts and direct requests for assistance to the appropriate organisation (i.e. to the Secretariat or other development partners).

Similarly, interviews with respondents in the field revealed that few development partners, donors or government officials in member countries were aware of the full range of work in which

the Secretariat is engaged. This evaluation revealed that this leads to a perception that 'The Commonwealth Secretariat is many different organisations, depending on who you to talk to'. Several in-country High Commissions and PCPs consulted during this evaluation explicitly advised that the Secretariat could improve its communications, both for ongoing collaboration and for its strategic planning in the medium to longer term. It was pointed out that, if stakeholders are not aware of what the Secretariat does or where it would like to focus its future efforts, then it will likely be overlooked as a recipient of funding or a go-to partner (see Box 4.8 for an example.) Likewise, in order for member countries to be able to align their requests to the mandate and priorities of the Secretariat, they must be aware of its current strategy. One of the High Commissions interviewed strongly recommended that the Secretariat strategically identify its partner organisations' specific priorities and niches, so that it can orient its partner governments' requests to areas where the Secretariat can provide added value.

Field mission interviews revealed that CHOGMs, ministerial meetings and informal user group meetings or ad hoc encounters with staff, former staff and consultants are the main channels by which country-level stakeholders learn about the Secretariat's strategic priority areas – none of them cited the website as a primary source of this type of information. While some Commonwealth organisations communicate directly to ministers, the Secretariat restricts divisions/units to communicate only to High Commissioners, who are expected to communicate to ministries. This is said to severely limit the communication of work carried out.

Reporting on 'results':

This evaluation found that SPED has helped improve reporting to the Board of Governors during this SP period; yet communication of the SP to stakeholders beyond the Board is very weak. In the words of one staff member: 'Our reporting doesn't reach the taxpayer at all. It stops within our Board'. Currently, the main audience for quantitative data and reports on results is the Board, while human interest stories are directed to the public. The numbers/data (which are currently captured by SPED) are complementary to the faces/stories (that the Communications Division [COMM] is documenting) – but there does not seem to be a

mechanism or interest in-house for systematic integration and collaboration between the two. Recognising that different audiences seek different types of information, and that it is the hard data/evidence that can best demonstrate the shift to a results-oriented culture, it would be advantageous to better integrate the quantitative data/numbers with the qualitative information/stories. There is interest in exploring Outcome Mapping as a possible means to better articulate the 'missing middle'. The 'in-focus stories' (formerly impact stories) within PMIS and the SP Monitoring Reports are a step in the right direction.

In the absence of a formal, corporate-wide system to disseminate technical/project information beyond (1) reports to the Board and (2) human interest stories to the general public, some departments have taken up their own initiatives. For instance, Climate Finance Hub Project staff reported extensive sensitisation activity in least developed countries (LDCs) to raise awareness of the new project; while the Trade Division publication *Trade Express* has helped increase demand. Some bespoke project websites have been created sitting outside the Secretariat main website, which staff perceived as not effective in showcasing individual projects. A strategic communication strategy is needed, to guide the entire organisation in the systematic dissemination of information on the SP and to ensure that all member countries, current partners and potential new partners/donors are aware of what the Secretariat's current priorities are, the kinds of services it offers and what its UVP is. By acknowledging that communications/visibility is the responsibility of teams beyond just COM, reputational risk can be better managed.

Routine communications

The level of satisfaction with routine communications pertaining to project planning and implementation varies, depending on the stakeholder group and the stage of programming. Different respondents may have quite varying views – even within the same country.

Long-term experts and consultants:

LTEs and consultants are generally pleased with ongoing communications with their technical supervisors (though many complaints were expressed about HR-related communications, as aforementioned). Consultants reported that they appreciated the Secretariat's participatory

approach to setting ToRs, which feed in each consultant's knowledge of the local context and/or technical expertise. One consultant echoed the views of many that the Secretariat is a reasonable client in calling them 'very accommodating and professional'. LTEs also reported having good working relationships with their technical counterparts and supervisors at HQ. One represented this view in saying, 'I had an excellent supervisor and a good rapport with her. As my backstop, she would always advise me. She even assisted where not required to (for instance, with HR issues), which made life easier for me'.

Partners/beneficiaries:

Most respondents stated that the Secretariat is generally quick to deploy experts once the paperwork is done, but that the process of considering and approving requests can be very long, with significant communication voids. Several external stakeholders in different member countries expressed concern with the lack of regular communication from the Secretariat during that initial stage of project design and approval (see Box 4.9 for an example). When it comes to technical support once the project is underway, however, stakeholders are quite satisfied. One government partner in Vanuatu noted that he and his technical counterparts at the Secretariat in London were always available – even conducting phone calls in both early morning and late at night, given the 11-hour time zone difference.

In the 2016 Meta-Evaluation, recommendations were directed to improving co-ordination with PCPs to ensure that assistance has maximum effectiveness. The Sri Lanka country evaluation, for instance, found that the Secretariat continued to approach the line ministries directly, without providing any information to the PCP. (That issue was also reported by one of the four PCPs interviewed in this evaluation.) The question of how country-level work is co-ordinated and aligned with the national plan was also raised as a common theme across country evaluations, and some recommendations focus on co-ordination with other external stakeholders, especially bi- and multilateral donors (Iwokrama evaluation, Debt Management evaluation).

Given the lack of a Secretariat presence on the ground (i.e., no country offices/staff), there may need to be more active contact and updating of contact information for PCPs and other key

Box 4.9 Case study on communications for managing member country requests: One country's experience

Government partners in one member country interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the process of managing member country requests and perceived inadequate communication from the Secretariat. The PCP and one other agency reported the following:

'*The major problem regarding requests is that there's a big gap between the sending of the request and the response. The Secretariat may approve a request, but then there is often a long lag before the expert is deployed and they don't always inform us of when the activity has begun.*

In addition, there have been times when we are completely in the dark about a project that is underway. There have been several cases where we were not notified by the Secretariat about a project or activity they're doing in country; and we only found out retrospectively when reading the annual country report that they prepare and send us. That's not an appropriate way of working.

The Secretariat's standard procedure is to contact the government agency where the expert will reside directly to arrange for start-up; but even though they contact the agency directly, the PCP needs to be copied on that communication. They should also indicate the target timeline for providing the support which would help us to be able to follow-up. We are responsible for all external funding to the country and we have to report annually on all support received. We monitor 14 different agencies, so the lack of information and communication from our donors makes that role even harder.

There have been instances when we solicited the proposals from the agencies (our Implementing Partners) and received a response indicating approval; but then the Secretariat has reverted to say they don't have adequate funds to do it. When you get the approval, you assume that the funding availability was also considered! So, this has affected credibility, and we are not so inclined to make many requests anymore.'

Feedback from Secretariat staff reveals a different perception of events of this case in-house, yet even if some of the 'facts' are invalid, this perception of the Secretariat is maintained by the member country; and therefore, active communication is needed to build relationships and avoid the impression of mixed messages going forward.

counterparts. For example, some names and contact information given to the evaluators for the in-country stakeholders (including for PCPs) were not up-to-date.

4.3.5 Recommendations for strengthening operations

1. Make concerted efforts to meet the requirements of the EU's '7 Pillars Assessment,' which is a good governance/ management audit required for accessing additional types of funding. Many of the EU-funded Hubs and Spokes programme's beneficiaries – such as the secretariats of COMESA, SADC and CARICOM – have graduated from the '7 Pillars Assessment'.

This suggests that the channelling of financial support through the Secretariat is becoming less necessary.

2. Acquire an enterprise-wide application to bring together HR, finance and procurement, as well as ME&R data. It is recommended that integration of PMIS and the financial system be prioritised, as well as the streamlining of reports from HR, IT and finance, to reduce the amount of manual reconciliation in PMIS and duplicative efforts in tracking and reporting information across the organisation. One option for consideration is to replace CODA with an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system and new streamlined processes to match.

Box 4.10 Good practice in collaboration

According to the EU, the Commonwealth Secretariat is currently implementing the multiyear Hub and Spokes programme in good collaboration with the Francophonie (OIF). The programme's budget of around 32m Euros is funded by the EU, OIF and the Secretariat. Over the 12+ years of the programme, essentially the Secretariat has provided technical advisers to Commonwealth countries, while OIF has provided them to Francophone countries, with the aim of enhancing the capacity of countries in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific to formulate suitable trade policies, participate effectively in international trade negotiations, and implement international trade agreements to their benefit. The Secretariat and OIF have worked in strong partnership throughout the life of the programme to date.

3. Establish a process for regular tracking and documentation of the status of recommendations, such as KPGM audits, EPG recommendations and evaluation studies.

4. Define the 'satisfactory' spending rate for each quarter, to strengthen the interpretation of burn rates and/or thresholds for performance, as well as establish a system for flagging consistent underspending.

5. Develop and implement a communications strategy for the dissemination of the new SP, which aims to inform all member countries, staff, Commonwealth organisations, potential donors and other partners of the Secretariat's strategic priorities and specific role/mandate (while emphasising its unique selling proposition and comparative advantages, as well as reinforcing the 'Commonwealth brand'). Strengthen the work under the SP component of 'increased understanding of SP among member countries and partners facilitated'. Facilitate close collaboration between the Communications (COM) and SPED teams, as well as greater integration between the quantitative data/numbers with the qualitative information/stories.

6. Ensure that member countries' requests are managed in a consistent manner, with regular communication to the PCPs.

4.4 Partnerships and collaboration

Key message: As the largest and best-resourced of the Commonwealth organisations, the Secretariat is expected to proactively facilitate the collaboration of the Commonwealth family. With more systematic and proactive engagement of significant Commonwealth organisations, the Secretariat will be well placed to lead the development of a joint agenda for the Commonwealth as a whole.

The Commonwealth comprises the Commonwealth Secretariat, two other intergovernmental bodies and more than 100 associations, networks and organisations, many of which bear the title 'Commonwealth'. These are in turn connected to several national, regional and international organisations that take an active interest in the work of the Commonwealth. As per DFID's 2011 *Multilateral Aid Review* (MAR) of the Secretariat, 'The interplay between these many different associations, which collectively form a family or a network of networks, is one of the Commonwealth's greatest strengths'. This MAR and subsequent DFID reviews also recognised that the Secretariat holds a unique place in the international system as a network of networks, which have the potential for sharing experience and influencing across and beyond its membership.

4.4.1 Collaboration with Commonwealth organisations

Both the SP and the EPG Recommendations[21] call for the Secretariat to consolidate a closer working relationship with the accredited Commonwealth organisations. Consultations were expected to be strategic and meaningful, in order to promote qualitative, knowledge-sharing and results-oriented dialogue. Most respondents applauded the specific reference to partnerships in the SP and the Commonwealth Charter, and the emphasis on acknowledging the totality of the Commonwealth. Yet this grand ambition of the SP to work with other organisations within the Commonwealth family has not been fully accomplished.

The SP launched an ambitious agenda in requiring the Secretariat to work together with all 83 Commonwealth organisations. Member countries expect collaboration between Commonwealth organisations, yet they also want assurances that there will be no duplication and overlap between agencies. During consultations, the Board could not agree on the collaboration framework in respect of this sensitive political area, extending as it did, for example, to the potential participation of civil society in ministerial meetings. A key barrier is that while member countries fund the Secretariat, they may not fund other agencies, so accountability remains with the Secretariat. In other words, High Commissions feel they have strong oversight of Secretariat activities, but they may not exert the same control over other Commonwealth sister organisations that are vocal in their criticism of member countries. The complexity of Commonwealth architecture is also a hindering factor. Respondents noted that some Commonwealth accredited organisations do not have capacity to contribute meaningfully, have little credibility and are not representative.

The SP specifically calls for strengthened partnerships with the Commonwealth Foundation (CF) and Commonwealth of Learning (COL), including regular consultations with both organisations to facilitate co-ordination and minimise duplication of effort. Both these organisations were positive about the potential for future co-working and collaboration; however, they report that agreements signed between the Commonwealth organisations are not followed-up by activity, and the significant issue of resource-sharing is overlooked. As one respondent mentioned: 'Collaboration amounts to sending reports to each other' – clearly a missed opportunity to leverage synergies for greater impact. Outreach from certain divisions is welcomed and appreciated. For example, YTH collaborates actively with several Commonwealth organisations (the Commonwealth Games Federation, Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council, Commonwealth of Learning, Royal Commonwealth Society etc.), and runs a quarterly Commonwealth Youth Policy Group to which these organisations are invited. Yet the overall extent of Commonwealth organisation engagement with the Secretariat is best described as ad hoc and unsustained.

The SP Monitoring Reports give several examples of relationship building with the 81 accredited Commonwealth organisations. It is reported that engagement with accredited organisations increased, with 81 per cent engaged in at least one meeting during 2015/16. Examples include the following:

- Tackling Corruption Together was successfully hosted in collaboration with accredited organisations Transparency International and the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council, as well as Thomson Reuters, Omidyar Network, The B Team, and ONE and DFID.

- Thirty (30) Commonwealth organisations attended the Foreign Ministers Roundtable at CHOGM 2015 in Malta.

- Engagement through the accredited organisations' workspace on Commonwealth Connects has also increased, with 77 per cent of all organisations sharing information, viewing or downloading documents, and/or holding discussions.

- Capacity development workshops were offered to Commonwealth organisations on fundraising, RBM and diversity of boards and membership, drawing 24, 10 and 21 members respectively.

- The Commonwealth Hub was launched in June 2016 with three accredited organisations – the Commonwealth Games Federation, the Royal Commonwealth Society and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum – moving into the newly renamed Commonwealth House in late 2016.

- In 2014–15, a consultative meeting of the accredited organisations was convened and attended by 60 organisations.

Box 4.11 Call for stronger collaboration in Vanuatu

In a national mapping exercise of development partners in different sectors, as part of the national strategic planning process, the Secretariat has been identified with a clear comparative advantage in the political and judicial sectors. However, the lack of local presence, communication on its strategic priorities and ability to consistently co-ordinate with development partners in-country were identified as obstacles to strengthening partnerships and maximising impact. The development and sharing of a clearly articulated strategy is necessary to form the basis for collaboration or partnership at the country level – stakeholders were unaware of the current Secretariat SP.

- The Secretariat convened a consultative meeting prior to the Financing for Development conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

- Representatives from the Commonwealth's other intergovernmental organisations and associated organisations were included in the Secretary-General's official delegation to special global intergovernmental meetings organised by the United Nations. This occurred in the case of the third UN Small Island Developing States (SIDS) summit in September 2014, as well as the UN Financing for Development conference in July 2015.

Within the SP period, SPED also reports that the Secretariat worked to harmonise efforts and reduce duplication at the project level. For example, it reduced its presence in relation to Local Government Forums and gave the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) funding to support a project on Sri Lanka local government capacity building. Likewise, the Secretariat gave up the facilitation of Opposition Government workshops, recognising that this was better catered for by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). At the CHOGM in Sri Lanka (2013), the Secretariat facilitated the first access to foreign ministers by associated Commonwealth organisations and, although this was only a short audience, it was significant in setting a precedent for future engagement.

SPED has also provided capacity development support in RBM to Commonwealth organisations. It is recognised that Secretariat has a powerful relationship with Heads of States and ministers; and Commonwealth organisations would like to capitalise on this access and influence. Commonwealth organisations have been given

a floor at CHOGM, yet there are no institutional mechanisms for high-quality information to be absorbed. It would be beneficial for the Secretariat to bring all partners together before the event to look at how to best synthesise learning and influence the CHOGM agenda – perhaps incorporating existing CHOGM infrastructure, such as the Commonwealth Committee of the Whole (COW).

The SP requires the Secretary-General to meet at least once every year with the Heads of intergovernmental organisations and attend consultative meetings with accredited organisations. Commonwealth organisations confirm that one-to-one meetings took place with the former Secretary-General and they sincerely hope this will continue to be a feature in the future, via consultative meetings which are strategic and meaningful. Commonwealth organisation perception is that there is will to engage at the top of the organisation, but that this does not trickle down to Unit Heads and they question the extent of information sharing at the institutional level in the Secretariat. It is noted that the Secretariat will need the institutional memory of associated organisations to ensure that collaboration graduates from being ad hoc. This will require regular exchange and dissemination of reports, and institutional encouragement to see Commonwealth organisations as partners. Commonwealth organisations are keen that the Secretariat should convene the Commonwealth family to discuss mandates, strengths, activities and mutual work plans. Only through this approach can the Commonwealth family multiply its impact to become more than the sum of its parts. One obvious hindering factor will be the restrictions on Secretariat staff time and capacity (see Section 4.3.1.)

Commonwealth organisations suggest that the process of coming together should be institutionalised at different levels. At the highest level, secretaries-general can meet twice a year, to enable a high-level strategic view, facilitate creation of links and relationships, address frustrations at the highest level and deliver shared messages to staff. Hosting may be rotated by the SGs of the respective organisations. The Secretariat should also convene at the technical level of Directors/ Heads, thus strengthening relationships at each level of the family and reinforcing messages, both internally and externally.

The Commonwealth Hub is recognised as a good idea, but 'living together' will not be sufficient – Commonwealth organisations will need to work together, too. Respondents found that the Secretariat needs to be more integrated in its approach, as all consultation is currently undertaken in an ad hoc way. There is no institutional mechanism for the Commonwealth family to come together to discuss challenges, share agendas and harmonise the launch of initiatives. In this respect, the Secretariat is 'just one culprit'.

Commonwealth organisations feel they have not yet received the desired proactive collaboration from the Secretariat. Respondents differentiate between levels of participation – for example, involvement and partnership. In other words, although they may be consulted by the Secretariat, they are not aware of how far this feedback is taken. Likewise, making a presentation to High Commissioners is not considered to be a relationship, rather a bureaucratic input for a certain event. Similarly, they may receive invitations to certain meetings, but are asked to invest their own minimal resources to attend. To strengthen the partnership, there should be co-ordination and joint planning with Secretariat, to develop a joint agenda for the Commonwealth as a whole, clearly mapping who can make what contribution. The envisaged collaboration could include special task forces and working groups on specific issues. This will require careful consideration in light of divergent agendas and mandates.

Strengthening the relationship should be a two-way process, a mutual initiative to investigate strengths and weaknesses of the respective organisations, as well as explore how to join together to build on or reduce these. This 'negotiation process' is currently missing, and it is hoped that the Secretariat will

take a lead on this. The collaboration must be a win-win framework, within which both parties gain. In the words of one respondent, 'It is easy to have an outcome for collaboration, but what is the plan, inputs, support, measurement? That requires an Operations Manual and not just a Strategic Plan'.

Finally, Commonwealth organisations report that the Secretariat approach to joint working is to corral this through a focal point. The focal point is considered effective and approachable, yet some Commonwealth organisations find that this gatekeeping by the Secretariat undermines potential to build relationships between technical counterparts in the respective organisations.

4.4.1 Other partnerships

As the ToRs of this evaluation did not call for interviewing any non-Commonwealth organisation partners, the data available on other partners and their perceptions of the SP was limited. Nevertheless, the desk review and interviews with staff and member country representatives enabled some broad conclusions to be made. First, it is clear that the Commonwealth network offers huge potential for practitioner-based co-operation and for international influencing – a claim also made by the DFID 2011 MAR. In particular, the Commonwealth can provide examples of bringing a beneficiary voice into the policy level. Second, the Secretariat's reputation – among organisations that know it – is generally very strong, especially as a trusted partner of member countries.

Since its work is driven by member country requests, the Secretariat's strongest partnerships are with government agencies – for example, via embedded experts within the ministries. Operational partnerships and co-ordination of project-based activities with a range of implementing partners are also quite strong, as evidenced in the Secretariat's annual and semi-annual progress reports.

Yet strategic partnerships and formal collaboration with development organisations and potential donors could benefit from strengthening. The DFID 2011 MAR stated that 'The Secretariat has an international role and has significant potential, but its current performance means it is not a critical international development actor'. A large reason for this is the limited visibility of its work, which is further discussed in the section on communications (see Section 4.3.4). Another factor is the lack of a

country presence, given that PCPs are not able to represent the Commonwealth Secretariat at the national level (although they do play a key role in overseeing and co-ordinating its work).

According to the July–December 2015 *SP Progress Report*, 'The lack of an organisational partnership strategy has limited the Secretariat's ability to effectively engage with and develop partnerships'. Recognising this gap, a strategy is under development which will include recommendations for governance, development of systems and processes, policies and guidelines to support the Secretariat in creating and maintain partnerships.

These findings are echoed in the 2016 Meta-Evaluation, which spanned 11 years of Secretariat programming and recommended to:

- develop a Secretariat-wide approach to co-ordination across divisions, within divisions, with PCPs and with external stakeholders, to improve effectiveness and maximise impact of the Secretariat's work;

- develop a Secretariat-wide approach for exploring, developing and maintaining strategic partnerships to maximise resources and impact; and

- the Secretariat should identify opportunities and invest in raising the visibility and awareness of the Secretariat, its comparative advantages and its work.

There is a clear lesson that for the Secretariat to achieve value for money and maximise resources, opportunities for collaboration and engagement in strategic partnerships will need to be better explored.

4.4.2 Recommendations for improved partnerships and collaboration

1. Finalise the corporate-wide Partnership Strategy and fast-track its implementation, including a large component on strategic communications and visibility. Introduce a centralised database of key contacts (i.e., PCPs, contributing partner focal points, LTEs etc.), develop protocols for its active updating, and assign responsibilities for relationship management to specific staff members.

2. Review the Secretariat's approach of channelling joint working through a focal point, in order that collaboration can flourish between technical counterparts in respective organisations.

3. Operationalise the EPG vision of strengthened collaboration, co-ordination and joint planning among Commonwealth organisations. The Secretariat should convene significant Commonwealth family members on a regular basis to discuss mandates, strengths, activities and mutual work plans; and should institute consultative meetings with Commonwealth organisations at different levels, including the Secretary-General and technical levels. Collaboration could include special task forces; working groups on specific issues; and forums prior to each CHOGM looking at how to synthesise learning and influence the CHOGM agenda.

4. Conduct an organisational SWOT analysis to identify areas of strength and comparative advantage, and locate this within mapping of other Commonwealth organisations and key stakeholders, to determine their mandates, comparative advantages and programming priorities. This would provide important information on which organisations might be best placed to deliver on-the-ground projects, and would enable the identification of potential partnerships that could be leveraged to achieve greater impact. Based on the findings of this mapping exercise, Secretariat staff should be encouraged to see Commonwealth organisations as delivery partners, be aware of their mandates and be wary to duplicate or trespass on these.

5. Findings: Results and Benefits to Member Countries

Key message: The Commonwealth Secretariat has a strong reputation as a niche agency for support on tailored requests and specific activities. Member countries appreciate that the Secretariat listens, enriches the request, offers South–South co-operation, contextual knowledge and a high-quality technical response.

The benefits noted in this evaluation reflect 'satisfaction levels' by member countries, reputational perceptions by other stakeholders and reports outputs delivered.

5.1 Satisfaction levels and perceived comparative advantages

Respondents were asked to comment on what the Secretariat does best and what it does better than others – in other words, what added value it offers to member countries. They were also asked to share their perception of the Secretariat's unique value proposition (UVP) and overall reputation. Some also shared their views on the benefits of Commonwealth membership.

The DFID 2016 MDR summarises well the importance of the Commonwealth Secretariat: 'The Commonwealth is a unique and important institution, providing a crucial forum for 52 countries to work together to tackle global challenges, champion democracy and fundamental freedoms, and promote prosperity for all'. The historical context of Commonwealth membership and the sharing of values and principles were emphasised by most respondents, contributing to a level of conviction on the difference the Commonwealth can make. While bilateral relationships can run deep, the Commonwealth is a free association, which means member countries choose to remain – they might disagree, but they have a clear political commitment to the Commonwealth. The added value of being part of this network is that members are united by language and have a common basis for legislation and structures, which enables them to use peer review to ensure that members adhere to general levels of good governance. According to respondents, the Commonwealth brand is still popular and appreciated – by sharing a common philosophy and principles, member countries can safeguard democratic values. Relationships are said to be a main comparative advantage of the Secretariat. In addition to having close contacts with senior ministers and other government officials, the Secretariat has a large informal network of experts and of Commonwealth alumni, which represents great social capital. 'The Secretariat shares and talks openly. This is a very different modus operandi than other organisations', said one respondent. The direct interaction with Heads of State is a special relationship that even

Box 5.1 Secretariat's perceived strengths: Stakeholder in Seychelles

'*Of the many organisations [we] interact with, the Secretariat is most sincere, most trustworthy. Other institutions like IMF and WB have an agenda. They are not genuine, not trying to help, they have their own objectives. The Secretariat is the foreign organisation I have the most respect for. There is only so much they can do. But what they can do has been helpful.*'

Stakeholder in Seychelles

Box 5.2 Secretariat's perceived strengths: Trade stakeholder in Jamaica

'*The Secretariat has an extremely strong reputation, despite their limited funds. They are particular on which projects they will support. They are the agency for support on specific niche activities. They require a well-crafted proposal, which is a good thing. With the Secretariat, we get to work much closer with technical people on the ground; they are very responsive; and approval timelines are much shorter. Perhaps being smaller makes them nimble and flexible. They are also proactive. They don't just rely on the beneficiaries to provide the information – they come to the table with recommendations to consider. They are collaborative, and this translates into a strong partnership based on what [member states] ask for. The Secretariat enriches the request. The UN dictates more, while [the Commonwealth] listens. We liked that.*'

Trade stakeholder in Jamaica

the UN envies, and the Secretariat's power to mobilise its members is described as 'phenomenal'. The Secretariat has the reputation of a 'convening partner' and 'trusted partner relationship', with the role to 'empower governments across different technical areas'. The organisation is also renowned for offering South–South co-operation.

A common observation is that the Secretariat funds 'with no strings attached', unlike other agencies such as World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – this is highly valued by member countries. There is high respect for the Secretariat – due to its impartiality and the notion that the Commonwealth will work for the good of a country, not for personal interests. It was noted that the shortage of finance reduced Secretariat visibility at the national level; while the Secretariat provides a lot of technical assistance, other development partners provide more financial resources.

Some respondents recognised the Secretariat as a thought leader and noted that it has taken a leadership position on number of issues. Its strength is seen to be responsiveness to requests and guidance to member countries. However, it was noted that the Secretariat would be 'an empty shell' without the technical assistance arm. Other respondents argued that the Secretariat is a catalyst organisation, best placed to identify exemplars and facilitate impact by ensuring these are linked to a variety of methods. A strategic role of any Secretariat would be to document examples of excellence and lessons learnt. Many argued that the comparative advantage of the Secretariat is the ability to convene countries at different levels

of development and implementation, to learn from them all, pilot initiatives and support countries to take these to scale.

Institutional strengthening is recognised as a Secretariat strength, specifically in relation to public administration – the management systems and human resource capacity to develop and implement policies and strategies. Although many donors fund policy and framework development, few development agencies support institutional strengthening, which is critical crosscutting work upon which all other programmes depend. The Commonwealth Secretariat does engage in and provide niche services under this important area, as part of SO1 and SO2.

The consulted Commonwealth organisations felt that, as the largest and best-resourced among them, the Secretariat should facilitate, consolidate and synthesise the Commonwealth organisation coalescence process – and should prioritise its role as a Secretariat, as opposed to project implementation.22 The Eminent Persons Group gave examples of specific organisations better placed to deliver on-ground projects than the Secretariat. Some respondents reported that the Secretariat has started to play a dual role and, in some cases, is duplicating activities that Commonwealth other organisations should be doing – even aggregating responsibilities in areas where it does not have expertise. Specific examples were shared of how the Secretariat is perceived to have overstepped its mandate, e.g.,

in reaching out to new contacts, circumventing the associated organisation that is best placed to broker this relationship.

Many respondents believe that that the political realm is where the Secretariat should continue to focus its efforts. As a neutral, apolitical entity that is considered a trusted partner of governments, it can provide tailored support in response to member countries' requests, without any political agenda. It is therefore well positioned to make a positive impact in the areas of democracy and governance, policy/legal reform, human rights, rule of law etc. Respondents predominantly know the Secretariat for its important work in governance. This includes policy reform and legislative drafting, election observation, justice and rule of law, and institutional development in small states. Youth, climate finance and trade were also cited; but none mentioned the Secretariat playing a major role in education, health, economic strengthening or other areas of development.

Several High Commissions pointed out that the sectoral aspects of 'development' work – such as climate change, health and education – are already covered by many other development partners which have much more funding and are more specialised in those fields. Therefore, respondents from partner organisations (especially donors), generally felt that the Secretariat should focus more on the political/governance work and less on development. Climate change, for example, is a crowded field and mentioned by these respondents as an area in which the Secretariat is not perceived as a key player, let alone a thought leader. Yet it is simultaneously an area of Secretariat engagement valued by member country stakeholders. The ongoing evaluation of the Secretariat's anti-corruption work (see Section 5.2.1) reports that, if the Commonwealth is to engage in a major programme of work to combat corruption within its member countries, despite its limited resources, it must look outside its own organisation to gain finance and expertise. In doing this, it must recognise that it has much yet to do to gain a reputation as an effective intermediary in the field of development.

Many staff focused on the tension between the highly demanding convening role of the Secretariat, and the programming work – in particular the challenges of delivering projects without a country presence on the ground. Staff felt this to

be a 'dichotomy' or even a split identity between being a 'Secretariat' versus a 'development agency'. However, a great many respondents also emphasised that the Secretariat's UVP is the ability to combine development and democracy narratives – since plenty of organisations can do either/or, but few combine the two.

5.2 Results of Strategic Plan implementation

Key message: The Secretariat is well recognised for its important role in giving SIDS a voice in global matters and strengthening their development. There is a sense of conviction of the difference the Secretariat can make among member countries. This is due to the historical context to the Commonwealth association; the Secretariat's special relationship with Heads of States; the lack of conditionality attached the Secretariat funding; and its capacity to empower governments across different technical areas.

A sample of representative projects was selected by the Secretariat for study under this evaluation, from which conclusions on successes and challenges across the Secretariat portfolio were to be derived. Highlights of the performance and outputs – as well as some short-term outcomes – of the eight sample projects[23] are presented below. As mentioned in the 'limitations' section, evaluators struggled to achieve a comprehensive perspective on outcomes and impact due to a lack of data on higher-level results and the expansive and strategic-level scope of this evaluation. The outcomes of the SP implementation were only examined in detail through two field visits to Seychelles and Vanuatu, so the findings draw heavily on the data collected on these missions. Annex C includes a summary of the findings at the country level for the two field visits. These findings also draw heavily from the SP Monitoring Reports, complemented by information from interviews with project staff,

country partners and experts. Other supporting evidence comes from evaluations pertaining to the SP implementation period and a recent Meta-Evaluation exercise commissioned by SPED.

5.2.1 Strategic and intermediate outcomes

There is still a perception among some external stakeholders that the Secretariat is not yet playing a critical role in meeting development objectives. According to the DFID 2013 MAR Update, the Secretariat 'continues to make modest contributions on important development issues, including through outreach and advocacy. However, the Secretariat proposals for a Strategic Plan focused on a small number of areas where they can add value did not secure consensus, and the agreed Plan is broader-based... Programmes appear to be delivering against their objectives, but there is little evidence of increased impact'. While it is not realistic to expect to see impact from projects newly introduced during the SP period (as implementation only began after 2013), it is reasonable to expect measurable results from ongoing projects that started prior to the current SP and continue to present. It seems, however, that most ME&R efforts are limited to capturing outputs and that sufficient evidence has yet to be gathered and/or disseminated on outcomes/impact. Below we discuss the results that we could document in this evaluation, by key result area.

SO1–Democracy

IO 1.3. Elections:

This initiative aims to strengthen electoral processes and democratic institutions, and ultimately to contribute to SO1 – Greater adherence to Commonwealth political values and principles. It represents some of the core work that the Secretariat has been supporting for decades around the world. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is a key contributor to this work.

In 2015–16, Commonwealth Observer Groups (COGs) reported elections in seven member countries (St Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu, and Uganda) and submitted recommendations to strengthen electoral processes. Highlights included the establishment of an Electoral Commission in Sri Lanka and

strengthened processes for campaign financing in Trinidad and Tobago, while ongoing support in Nauru ahead of its July 2016 elections contributed to the establishment of a strengthened independent Election Commission and more robust voter verification and identification processes.

COGs were sent to 13 national, parliamentary, presidential and subnational elections in 2014/15. Demonstrable improvements were noted in eight elections where previous COG recommendations were implemented, including:

- Mozambique simplified processes to resolve election-related disputes;

- Solomon Islands established a national biometric voter registration system;

- Lesotho amended its National Assembly Electoral Act to provide a sound basis for conducting transparent and credible elections and focused on strengthening the credibility of the register;

- Nigeria restructured its Independent National Electoral Commission, created a biometric register of voters and introduced continuous voter registration; and

- In Papua New Guinea's Autonomous Region of Bourgainville, the facility for out-of-constituency voting was expanded.

It was reported by Seychelles Election Commission that Secretariat observation missions are highly respected, due to their non-biased approach and guidelines, and provision of a full team of experts including legal, gender, electoral specialists etc. The Secretariat election observation reports are said to be timely, providing good quality feedback and recommendations. However, some respondents commented that Secretariat election reports could be more direct in pushing the agenda in their reporting.

Vanuatu is in the process of successfully implementing many of the recommendations from the 2016 COG Report; and in response to the Prime Minister's request, the Secretariat has been instrumental in assisting the country with that work. The Secretariat is viewed as an extremely valuable partner in this area and has been supporting the country with various elections and related political reforms since 2010.

SO2–Public Institutions

IO 2.1. Human Rights:

Under this initiative, the Secretariat provides technical assistance and policy advice to member countries for the establishment and/ or strengthening of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and a networking and capacity development platform for NHRIs through the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions. Strengthening domestic institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights aims to contribute to more effective, efficient and equitable public governance.

Implementation of the project has encompassed technical assistance to establish NHRIs in Grenada, The Gambia (which subsequently left the Commonwealth), Jamaica and Seychelles. In all these countries between 2013 and 2016, stakeholder roundtables were convened with government and selected national institutions to explain in detail the international standards and framework which underscores the establishment process. Policy advice was subsequently provided to all countries and technical advice on the draft legislation was provided to Jamaica, The Gambia and Seychelles during the lifecycle of the strategic plan. Institutional development and legislative reform, especially in sensitive areas as human right protection, are long-term processes that may not be fully realised within a four-year strategic cycle.

Interviews with national stakeholders suggested that the process for setting up NHRIs can be quite slow, with Seychelles for instance having spent two years on this. Therefore, respondents could not talk about the operationalisation of such bodies nor their impact on more effective, efficient and equitable public governance (SO2). Yet, support for the ground work is said to have built partners' confidence; the Guidance Note provided by the Secretariat has offered them strategies for establishment, and the sensitisation work has both enriched the national debate on the topic and improved awareness and buy-in of human rights issues. Implementation readiness challenges were noted on both the Secretariat and government sides. However, the Secretariat is credited with getting dialogue going and bringing people to the table; and although the process has now stalled, the Secretariat was recognised as a pragmatic, reliable and consistent partner.

Under the project, operationalisation and strengthening in member states was also taken forward. In 2014, the Government of Swaziland was assisted to operationalise the Swaziland Commission for Human Rights and Public Administration (SCHRPA), via a needs assessment with recommendations for the full operationalisation of the commission. Throughout 2013 to 2016, the Secretariat assisted the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka in discharging its human rights protection mandate, building capacity of the commission's national and regional offices to conduct national inquiries, and engage with civil society, religious and community leaders.

Commonwealth NHRIs were supported to participate in the biennial meeting of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions, building knowledge and expertise in the areas of business and human rights (2013) and torture prevention and prohibition (2015). In 2014, senior officials from 14 NHRIs across different Commonwealth regions completed a week-long training programme to explore ways of preventing, managing and resolving human rights-related disputes. Participants reported strengthened knowledge and ability to use mediation and negotiation within their work. In 2015, the Secretariat convened – under the auspices of the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI) – a working session focused on the role of NHRIs in the prevention of child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) across the Commonwealth, involving 42 participants from 15 CFNHRI members. One of the firm outcomes of the working session was the Kigali Declaration. In the declaration, NHRIs acknowledged that CEFM presents a serious and persistent violation of the rights of young women and girls, and causes irreparable damage to victims and society. The declaration has resulted in NHRIs undertaking several impactful interventions, such as public education campaigns (Cameroon), establishing a children's rights desk (Namibia), and initiating memoranda of understanding with traditional leaders and their governance structures to leverage their role in preventing and eliminating CEFM (Malawi, Ghana).

In 2015–16, 17 NHRIs adopted the St Julian Declaration on Climate Justice at the biennial meeting of the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI) held in the margins of CHOGM 2015, which committed them to taking tangible action on climate justice

in the context of discharging their mandates to protect and promote human rights. In 2016, the first CFNHRI Strategic Plan 2016–19 was agreed and a CFNHRI website was launched to facilitate information sharing.

It was particularly notes that project implementation was affected by delays in adoption of the Strategic Plan and organisational reform, with the Human Rights Unit achieving a full and permanent staff complement only in March 2016.

IO2.4. Rule of Law:

Although this was not one of the sampled projects, extensive work was being done in this area within both Field Mission countries, so this report includes a brief analysis of performance. This initiative aims to strengthen national institutions to effectively facilitate the administration and delivery of rule of law and justice.

Seychelles has seen the placement of two Supreme Court judges and one court administration adviser. As a result, the backlog of cases has been significantly reduced, by in excess of 70 per cent in the Criminal Division and 25 per cent in the Civil Division. The computerisation and introduction of the Computerised Case Administration System Seychelles (CCASS) system in the Supreme Court has improved the processing and management of court cases. Stakeholders reported that the judiciary has gained the trust of Seychelles public, and that there have been positive changes in the performance of the Supreme Court since the inception of the project. The two Commonwealth judges have contributed to bringing about change in sentencing practice, namely the use of concurrent (as opposed to consecutive) sentences and the development of a sentencing tariff. In an election petition brought to challenge the December 2015 victory of the presidential election by a narrow margin, the chief justice selected the two foreign judges to preside for reasons of independence. Five rulings were handed down, including one which was instrumental for Seychelles constitutional law and critical of the electoral commissioner, described by one stakeholder as 'a tremendous legacy from the jurisprudence point of view'.

In **Vanuatu**, due to recruitment and support of two positions (a Supreme Court judge and a master of court) within the Supreme Court, there is evidence of improved functioning of the Supreme Court in terms of a reduction in backlogged cases, the

introduction of mediation to increase the rate of closure of cases, and improved standards for rule of law and justice. Notable achievements include the 2015 sentencing of 15 Members of Parliament (MPs) for corruption by a Supreme Court judge, whose position was funded by the Secretariat for several years and who was subsequently hired directly by the Vanuatu government.

IO 2.6. Improved public administration (anti-corruption):

Anti-corruption was also not selected as a focus area for this evaluation; however, given that the evaluators were requested to incorporate findings from the ongoing[24] anti-corruption evaluation in Africa, a paragraph has been included to highlight the main outputs identified. These included: the launch of the Association of Anti-Corruption Agencies (AACA) in 2011, an annual meeting of anti-corruption agencies; the establishment of the Commonwealth Africa Anti-Corruption Centre (CAACC) in 2013; and continuous capacity development and support to the CAACC. Preliminary findings of the ongoing evaluation revealed that the Secretariat's work to date clearly represents a useful initial contribution in a very difficult field and one which is a growing concern for member countries; and demonstrated the readiness of Commonwealth institutions to undertake joint anti-corruption development work. However, the extent of corruption in developing countries, its complexity and the resources necessary to achieve a measurable impact require an intervention on a much larger scale and with far greater commitment from its member countries than currently applies under the present arrangements.

SO3–Social Development

IO 3.1. Health Outcomes:

This initiative aims to strengthen national health frameworks and policies in the Commonwealth, thus contributing to enhanced positive impact of social development (SO3). As it was designed, the project has the potential to be instrumental in helping member countries address the SDGs on health and more. Yet the initiative struggled to take off, and limited results have been reported throughout the three years. Changes in leadership and accountability issues seem to be the root of the problem, leading to discrepancies between what is on paper and what is happening in practice.

Consequently, staff find it difficult to report on the work because the system (PMIS) is set up to capture activities against expected results defined in the PDD. The evaluation indicates that project/section staff have differing views about what the project should achieve and how they should go about doing this. And there are questions about the relevance of the work and how well the proposed health frameworks actual align to the member countries' priorities.

Despite these challenges, some outputs achieved during this SP period include the following:

- the Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting (CHMM) in May 2016 saw ministers welcome the development of the Commonwealth Health Systems Framework and Health Protection Toolkit;

- the Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) Commissions Strengthening Project, delivered in partnership with the Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC), saw significant progress through the development of an Implementation Framework for the Establishment and Strengthening of National NCD Commissions, which was due to be piloted by HCC with Secretariat technical assistance in three countries in 2016 (Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, and St Vincent and the Grenadines); and

- In 2014, the Secretariat's draft publication Accelerating Progress Towards Universal Health Coverage in the Commonwealth facilitated consensus on the way forward at a UHC Advocacy event where 16 member countries were represented.

SO4 – Youth

As previously mentioned, no projects within the Youth pillar were shortlisted for in-depth review by this evaluation. Yet because youth is such a major component of the Secretariat's work, this report features a brief section to discuss it.

According to an interim evaluation report (December 2016),[25] stakeholders have unanimously praised YTH for its work in promoting CYP, and they endorse the role of the Secretariat as a 'thought leader' in the youth sphere, with achievements spreading across the Commonwealth and global impacts. There is very strong recognition of the achievements of CYP and the contribution it has

consistently made to member countries, through multilevel engagement (from grassroots activities with youth up to support at the policy-making level), as well as a comprehensive portfolio that maps across a broad range of issues relevant for youth populations of the Commonwealth.

Nevertheless, respondents were not fully supportive of the Secretariat's ongoing transition from a decentralised to a centralised model. In particular, they are worried that the traditionally close relationships built up by CYP through the regional presence could be diminished or even lost. There are also concerns about: the logistical implications of the new model (e.g., perceived difficulties of communication and maintenance of direct contact, which can disrupt efforts to sustain CYP communities); the potentially negative symbolic impact of concentrating management of activities and administration in London; and the difficulties that the transition can lead to in terms of ensuring the relevance of CYP, from a centralised approach (e.g., with regard to the content of activities).

Finally, the CYP review included a recommendation to update the programme's Theory of Change to reflect the new model. While the former Theory of Change was based on a premise of a decentralised programme, the newly proposed Theory of Change adopts a macro-level, vertically-orientated approach, whereby effects of CYP activities on the ultimate beneficiaries can occur via a trickle-down, cascading approach.

SO5–Development: Pan-Commonwealth

IO 5.1. Trade Capacity:

This initiative supports trade and competitiveness in the Commonwealth, to promote more inclusive economic growth and sustainable development (SO5). For example, in 2015 the Secretariat supported 25 member countries to improve their national trade competitiveness in global markets; and six of these (Jamaica, Botswana, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, India, Nigeria) saw key results, including finalised trade competitiveness strategies, government endorsed national export strategies (NES), a new Aid-For-Trade strategy, or increased capacity of export credit industry. At CHOGM 2015, Heads of Government mandated the establishment of a Commonwealth Trade Finance Facility, and in March 2016 the 2nd

Box 5.3 Stakeholder's view of the Secretariat's Debt Management Project

''Especially these days, the government's number one priority is debt management and how to keep debt to an acceptable level. All decisions rely on data, so for the back office this system is quite essential. The CS-DRMS is the only foreign database in the country. It is very user-friendly compared to the unique system we had before; and we are totally dependent on it. Some debt terms and conditions cannot be captured in the system, and we have asked the Secretariat to rectify this. If we need customised reports, then we inform the Secretariat and they assist.'

Government official in a member country

Commonwealth Expert Group on Trade developed recommendations for the global community to revitalise global trade and multilateralism.

The EU-funded Hubs and Spokes II programme's regional and national trade advisers provided technical support in 12 countries for international and regional trade agreements in Africa. Member countries were fully prepared to address negotiating issues and policy options at the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi in December 2015, because of regional preparatory meetings facilitated by the Secretariat; and were better informed and prepared for major trade and development negotiations, because of the first Commonwealth Trade Symposium held in South Africa in June 2015.

In Seychelles, the Secretariat provided a senior trade policy adviser, who delivered six major enactments in preparation for accession to WTO, supported by two short-term legislative drafters who drafted the specific laws required for the WTO accession. The presence of a full-time technical adviser supported Seychelles to 'leapfrog' other countries in the accession queue; and was one of the main factors responsible for the rapid progress of Seychelles accession to the WTO, which had been stuck since 1997.

In 2014, the Secretariat placed a short-term expert for a one-year placement in the Office of Intellectual Property, whose primary responsibility was to assist in the implementation of the new law, by interpretation and practical application of the new law. The long-term expert (LTE) has been successfully training staff to raise awareness in

relation to the new laws; however, on the legal side, it is felt that greater specialism may be required to interpret the law.

In the Office of the Chief Trade Adviser (OCTA) based in **Vanuatu**, the Secretariat has placed several trade experts, who have been highly commended for their role in developing the regional capacity of trade advisers from Pacific Island countries. Together with OCTA staff, they played a key role in advancing negotiations of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER)-Plus trade agreement between Pacific Island states, including NZ and Australia.

A 2015 Impact Assessment on Institutional Strengthening of the Credit Union Sector in The Bahamas found that the Secretariat's provision of a credit union long-term technical adviser to the Central Bank was highly relevant to the country's needs. This placement has helped to strengthen the operational effectiveness and regulatory regime of the credit union sector in the Bahamas, contributing to improved regulation of the financial sector in the country.

IO 5.3. Debt Management:

The Secretariat's Debt Recording and Management System (CS-DRMS) is a globally recognised system for countries to manage their debt it is used by 100+ government agencies in 60 countries. The Secretariat supports capacity development by offering global and regional training, as well as placing a technical expert on the ground for advisory services. Yet project impact can be hindered by limited institutional capacity at the country level, including staff numbers, capacity, turnover levels and political will. In 2015–16, five countries accepted recommendations to

Box 5.4 Case study of Seychelles

According to Seychelles experience, the Commonwealth's strengths lie in democracy and public institutions, government and elections. Respondents said that other organisations don't have a pillar dedicated to small vulnerable states. A good point of comparison is the Francophonie states association. It is not as targeted and focused compared to the Secretariat SP; it does not have a specific focus on small states – and the strategy is not as clear and visible. The Secretariat engages at different levels of discussion – e.g. Small States Forum– this is open engagement, not something that other organisations do very well.

improve their public debt management, including Malta, Trinidad and Tobago, Sri Lanka, Fiji and The Bahamas; meanwhile, the Secretariat has developed e-learning courses to build capacity in public debt management in member countries. In Jamaica, debt restructuring of the domestic debt portfolio – supported by the Secretariat – was carried out in 2013, facilitating a substantial debt service cost reduction – from 54 per cent to 43 per cent of budget or annual cost savings of approximately 17 billion Jamaican dollars (J$), and targeted reduction of debt-to-GDP by 8.8 per cent by 2020.

Seychelles has used the CS-DRMS since 2004 as its main recording system for external debt. The Debt Management Unit (DMU) has four staff, and Secretariat officials have visited Seychelles on three occasions to provide specific training on the CS-DRMS software and debt sustainability analysis. The training was described as 'fantastic tailored training'. The Director of Public Debt, Ministry of Finance, Seychelles has been to London to attend a conference on debt restructuring and made presentations at other Secretariat events, which are excellent for exchanging experiences with other countries.

Vanuatu's recently established DMU commends the CS-DRMS for its multiplicity of functions, especially the ease in reporting and conducting the Debt Sustainability Analysis required by the World Bank and IMF. With the increasing amount of debt maturing, the data that this software can generate is valuable for providing parliament and key decision-makers with evidence on the impact of the current levels of debt to the national economy, as well as promoting a reduction in the number of new loans in the pipeline, the negotiation of lower interest rates and the securing of more grants.

Despite the potential to make debt management more effective and efficient, the team has not yet started using the latest version of the CS-DRMS – and instead is making do with Excel. This is mainly due to the technical glitches the team has encountered since installing the updated version of the software. The issue has been discussed with the Secretariat's support team, and a recent regional training in Fiji Islands was considered very useful in helping to address the current challenges. Regardless, the risk of this problem reoccurring is still high.

IO 5.4. Ocean Governance & Natural Resource Management:

Again, ocean governance and natural resource management is not one of the areas targeted by this evaluation; however, given the significant work being done to promote effective, equitable, transparent and sustainable marine and other natural resources within the Field Mission countries, the report briefly addresses this area.

The Secretariat has been instrumental in the development of the Blue Economy (BE) Roadmap in Seychelles, and is one of few development partners to have identified the oceans as a core development opportunity for member countries and focused on practical measures to implement the 'Blue Economy' in SIDS. This has included technical assistance to elaborate the Blue Economy for national and international positioning and the facilitation of a two-day meeting of senior officials and experts in London to clarify a future vision for the Blue Economy, which was tremendously helpful in developing national ownership.

Seychelles applied for a CFTC-funded technical adviser to assist with implementation of the Blue Economy Roadmap, and this LTE is an invaluable member of the newly established two-person

Blue Economy Department in the newly organised Ministry of Finance, Trade and Blue Economy. Strong technical support is also provided by the Secretariat's

Oceans and Natural Resources (ONR) team via quarterly teleconferences, which are regarded as 'backstopping, which is really needed'. However, Seychellois respondents found that 'The Secretariat should be more actively seen and participating, as they are not always present at key Blue Economy forums'.

To develop the Blue Economy, Seychelles needs to develop boundaries; and to this end, the Secretariat has assisted Seychelles with its submission to the UN for joint management with Mauritius of the extended continental shelf in the Mascarene Plateau Region, which is unique in being the only example of joint maritime management in the world. Stakeholders report that the Secretariat was instrumental in assisting Seychelles to defend the boundary delineation at the UN, providing two short-term consultants to prepare data and help with the development of a management plan. The Secretariat has also committed to field two additional CFTC-funded short-term experts, and the government is considering the most pressing needs to be addressed will likely be support for a tuna fisheries assessment and to develop a national research strategy for marine science.

In **Vanuatu**, the Secretariat has provided technical assistance to the Foreign Affairs Office to facilitate the development of a National Oceans Policy, considered pivotal for ocean governance. Its fast response in deployment of expertise and the quality of support was appreciated by local stakeholders. The Secretariat is also supporting the Ministry of Land and Natural Resources in a review of the *Mines and Minerals Act* and the *Petroleum Law*, commencing with a scoping mission, needs assessment, and inter-disciplinary training on petroleum exploration for staff from multiple ministries.

SO6–Development: Small States and Vulnerable States

The 2015 evaluation of the Secretariat's assistance to small states in Geneva on multilateral trade issues showed that the project successfully: supported the intervention of Commonwealth small states into WTO activities; furthered the dialogue with Commonwealth small states on key issues

such as non-tariff measures and trade facilitation; and contributed to the discussion and negotiations surrounding trade in services. Furthermore, the project has successfully assisted small states in articulating well-informed positions in negotiations and identifying key issues that can be addressed in the post-Bali environment.

The Secretariat is much appreciated for its efforts to strengthen the resilience of small and vulnerable states. The 2011 MAR conducted by DFID recognises this, stating that, 'The Secretariat plays a niche role in supporting and representing the needs of small (mainly island) states'. In addition, respondents from island states such as Vanuatu, Seychelles and Jamaica expressed that it was good to have an advocate who helped to give them a voice in global and regional agendas. Working at a high-level in larger countries has little impact on the ground, but it trickles down in small states and can be quite transformative.

IO 6.3. Climate Financing Frameworks:

According to project staff, the Secretariat has found a particular niche, in that climate financing is one specific aspect of climate frameworks which is reportedly not being tackled by others. While some climate financing work was being done as a component of an environment project during the last SP, this particular project was introduced with the current SP. It aims to launch a Climate Finance Access Hub, to build members' capacity to unlock funding and ensure it is directed towards their most vital adaptation and mitigation needs. The central hub, hosted by Mauritius, will function as a gateway for regional and national support, and will facilitate South–South sharing of skills, knowledge and expertise. Three climate finance advisers will be placed in partnerships in the Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Ocean regions to serve as 'spokes' to the hub, while national advisers will be deployed at the request of members to provide longer-term support in-country. The initiative targets small states and least developed countries (LDCs).

Following extensive preparations in 2013/14 and staff placements in mid-2015, the implementation phase began in November 2015. At the time of writing, 13 countries had requested support. In order to be able to address all eventual requests and ensure continued support beyond the current four-year period, the team is seeking funds from other member countries to expand the work.

Box 5.5 Good practice: Gender

For trade technical assistance, gender is considered at each stage, from carrying out stakeholder consultations to ensuring strategies consider issues such as access to employment for women. In support to Sierra Leone, for example, gender was a key consideration when including gari products (agri-processing) in the industry packaging action plan, given that women growers, processors and some traders are disproportionately represented. Work is also in progress to mainstream gender in the Secretariat's work on debt management and global finance advocacy, as well.

—Annual Results Report (ARR) 2015/16

Since implementation has just begun, it is too soon to see any results, especially in terms of improved climate financing frameworks or strengthened resilience of small and vulnerable states (SO6). Yet the project team is convinced it has significant potential for scalable and sustainable results, given the project's emphasis on long-term capacity building of national counterparts and the flexibility it offers for models that are tailored to each country's context. Another enabling factor will surely be the partnerships being formed – for instance, the Secretariat has been collaborating with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to offer training across the Commonwealth; and it is a member of the GCF Readiness Coordination Mechanism, along with the World Resources Institute (WRI), the German Technical Cooperation (GIZ), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and others.

5.2.2   Enabling and internal outcomes

A.2 – Technical Assistance, Referrals and Partnership Mechanisms:

This initiative is highly regarded within and outside the organisation, particularly the technical assistance mechanism funded by the CFTC, through which the Secretariat deploys experts based in partner agencies (i.e., ministries or courts) in response to specific, vetted requests from member countries. LTEs are embedded in partner agencies to work on a key deliverable, starting with a two-year contract, which can often be extended. In 2015/16, 13 new technical assistance projects were approved, bringing the total number of approved engagements to 58, with more than 67 per cent of the technical assistance programme directed at small states. The evaluation suggests that expert placement is highly valued by member

countries, offering a tangible return on investment. There is great demand for experts in rule of law to support law revision, governance structures, legal drafting, backlogs of judicial cases etc. However, the thematic balance of the programme has broadened over the lifetime of the Strategic Plan, with nearly all thematic areas, except debt and human rights, now included.

As a key Secretariat delivery mechanism under this SP and a cross-cutting dimension of programming, this initiative is discussed in various sections of this report – most notably *Sections 3.2.1, 3.4.3, 4.4, and 6* (pertaining to SP Logic and coherence, Organisational reform and cross-divisional collaboration, Routine communications and sustainability). Other actions implemented under this result area relate to advocacy and partnerships, which are discussed in *Section 4.4*. For that reason, it is not elaborated upon here.

B.4 – Quality and Results in the new Strategic Plan:

This initiative (Project #NRCWG0943) is dedicated to institutionalising RBM within the organisation and key activities conducted since 2013, which include: revision of the SP with a more robust SRF, following the MTR; intensive RBM staff training, including online RBM training package development; orientation of stakeholders, such as diplomats, on RBM; and PMIS developments, including the addition of monitoring and reporting modules and a country briefs system to generate briefs for Secretary-General missions. Given that the development and delivery of the SP is a key component of the 'Quality and results in the new SP' project, this entire evaluation is essentially an assessment of this project's performance. As such, conclusions on its effectiveness can be drawn from the overall findings and recommendations of this report.

Box 5.6 Example of attention to gender in Vanuatu

In Vanuatu, females are reportedly undervalued in society and subject to high levels of domestic violence, sexual abuse and incest. According to respondents, few women and girls have a strong sense of worth, know or defend their own rights, or hold positions of power or leadership. While some laws exist that give women rights to inheritance (responsibility for probate), land ownership and other rights, they are not fully aware of the laws – nor do they have the authority or the voice to assert them in the face of the males in their communities. According to the Gender Section, it is the one country that doesn't have a single female in government.

The Supreme Court in Vanuatu is taking modest steps, on its own initiative, to address these gender issues. For instance, when judges encounter a case pertaining to inheritance, they can use the opportunity to educate the plaintiffs and defendants on the law, which states that the woman is supposed to apply for probate. She has the first right and responsibility for probate when her husband passes away, despite men's (sons or brothers) belief that it is their right to distribute their deceased father/brother's land and funds.

Another issue is early or unwanted pregnancy; when teenage girls get pregnant – often from rape or just ignorance around reproductive health – they tend to be pressured to give up their baby for adoption immediately after giving birth. In the interest of protecting these children – among which girls are the most vulnerable – from traffickers, paedophiles and bad homes, adoption has come to the forefront of the master of the court's (MoC's) work.

The master (a Secretariat LTE) has been working to put in place a system to involve the court in the adoption process as early as possible. Rather than assess the family herself before making a recommendation to the final judge, she has secured a trilingual psychologist to become the court-appointed psychologist (the first and only one). The biological parents are sent to this psychologist for an assessment, to ensure that they have given initial and final consent – and are of the right mentality to do so. The MoC has worked with government officials to introduce a new procedure, whereby the government can name the state as guardian of the child, which empowers the authorities to go into the home and check on the status of the adopted child. They can also issue an interim custody order for the initial period, ensuring that the mother keeps her baby for the first six weeks of life – as per the law – to enable the mother to make an informed decision about whether to give it up, as well as for the social and health benefits to the baby (breastfeeding etc.) The master has also collaborated with French lawyers to orient midwives on this approach, since they are usually the first point of contact. She is now working with midwives to create a pamphlet to give basic information to the babies' mothers, as well. While the situation is not fool-proof, it is a significant improvement on the past.

Another idea proposed by the MoC is to create a Bench Bar Committee, which would provide an opportunity for female members of the Bar to come together. Even the simple matter of having a female judge or master is also a way to tackle gender inequalities, by providing a rare example of an educated woman in a powerful position. The Secretariat placed the first female judge ever in Vanuatu's Supreme Court, and the current master of court is also a woman. 'When women see that you are a judge, you see

5.2.3 Advances/results in gender

The 2016 Meta-Evaluation found that, across 30 evaluations except for the mid- and end-term evaluations of the Gender Plan of Action, gender was not a commonly occurring theme, nor was consideration to gender issues a requirement in the evaluation's ToR. That reflects the findings of this evaluation; however, it should be noted that little information was available on outcomes and impacts relative to gender. Our conclusions are mostly based on interviews with Secretariat staff

and on internal progress reports, which tend to focus on activities and outputs. The evaluations conducted during the SP period did not emphasise gender mainstreaming, and few respondents could cite advances in gender when asked – neither in virtual interviews nor those that took place in field visits. This raises serious questions about the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming across divisions/projects. The obvious lack of any references to gender signals that such mainstreaming is not happening.

This evaluation found that most gender work at the country level pertains to developing policies for mainstreaming and strategy for gender or gender equality, while some involves capacity building to institutionalise those policies/strategies. As such, gender-related support to member countries is mainly delivered through technical assistance mechanisms, not service delivery projects.[26] In other words, it is not done in a particularly integrated or mainstreamed manner, but rather in response to specific requests from countries and primarily as part of gender-specific projects.

On this topic, one respondent made an interesting observation regarding the practical challenges of mainstreaming gender into Divisional work, given the Secretariat's standard modality of funding only in response to members' requests: countries most in need of gender-related support are probably the least likely ones to request it. 'There is such a patriarchal culture that they'd never recognise the need or request help!' With this in mind, gender may be most effectively addressed through the Secretariat spearheading of gender-specific projects or integration of gender into sector-specific projects/expert ToRs. Given that the Secretariat operates solely based on requests submitted by ministries, it is probable that many gender-related problems will not be addressed. This is a question that would be worthwhile for the Secretariat to further explore.

Most of the results documented come from HQ-level initiatives, predominantly led by the Gender Section. For many years (since the early 2000s), the Secretariat has produced some excellent books and manuals on gender mainstreaming in various sectors and areas, from gender mainstreaming in conflict, to gender mainstreaming for trade, to gender mainstreaming for health. These have been well received in the development world. Some of these publications have been produced during this SP period, but this seems to be despite – as opposed to because of – the new SP.

Recently, the Gender Section worked with HRU and the Law Development Section of Rule of Law (ROL) Division to provide member countries with legislative drafters who developed a quite exceptional Judicial Bench Book on integrating gender into legislation. It dealt largely with legal aspects of violence against women and girls (VAWG). This was the first ever resource of this nature in Commonwealth countries. This unique publication was launched by the Chief Justice in Kenya, then was presented recently at the Eleventh Women Affairs Ministerial Meeting (11WAMM), where all members expressed that they wanted similar support. Next, it will be taken to Asia, then elsewhere. The budget for the work was shared, with the project supporting 80 per cent in partnership with UN Women and the Gender Section covering the remaining 20 per cent.

The Gender Section also produced a concept note for research on the impact and status of women in the Pacific, where there are high levels of VAWG and there are some legislative barriers for women to enter politics. The idea is to document the status, so each region can learn from the others, as well as to identify needs such as capacity development of paralegals and/or on-the-job training of women in the Pacific.

Through member country support in response to specific requests for capacity development, the following results have been achieved at the country level:

- The Bahamas has institutionalised a gender policy;

- Seychelles' government now disaggregates all data by gender, and aligns it with SDG 5;

- in Namibia, the Secretariat provided an expert to conduct a Gender Integration Audit; and

- Tanzania has successfully undertaken actions to increase women in corporate leadership.

There was some feedback that the Gender Section is replicating what other organisations are doing, and should be engaged in policy work with ministries responsible for women's affairs rather than projects.

5.2.4 Recommendations for maximising results

1. Establish a working group to look at the dichotomy of democracy/political work versus development work in the house, and develop an action plan and working group to promote synergies, opportunities and mutual inter-relations between the two pillars, e.g., evaluation or research, promote and publicise cross-pillar initiatives, development of a counterpart system etc.

2. Increase efforts to capture and document the higher-order results (outcomes and impact) of projects/programmes. This will require going beyond six-monthly and annual reporting by LTEs and consultants, and utilising evaluative monitoring, reviews and ex-post evaluation.

3. There is a need for more strategic, proactive approaches to gender mainstreaming. Rather than awaiting member countries' requests for gender-specific support, the Secretariat should consider ways to integrate gender into other projects, including at the level of LTEs' ToRs.

6. Findings: Sustainability

Key message: Examples of sustainable practice in the Secretariat context include: technical assistance that is demand-driven, allocates time to build ownership, consists of ongoing support and is part of a larger programme; and learning promotion across the Commonwealth network.

6.1 Examples of sustainable work and opportunities for sustainability

Below are a few examples of sustainable (or potentially sustainable) work supported by the Secretariat, as revealed in the interviews conducted as part of this evaluation. Due to respondent access and field visit selection, most these are based on examples from small island states.

CFTC Long Term Expert programme: Significant research (Aid Data) shows that where technical assistance is targeted to directly meet countries' needs, there is a multiplier effect in terms of impact. The Secretariat's mechanism for delivering technical assistance via long-term experts is an example of this. CFTC is helping to extend the reach, visibility and impact of the Secretariat's programmes, offering a multilayered approach (alongside short-term experts, Secretariat staff technical assistance, workshops and forums etc.) which increases likely impact and sustainability.

The Secretariat's UVP is to combine development and democracy narratives and the CFTC enables the Secretariat to have difficult discussions with countries where democracy is fragile, because it can provide meaningful democratic assistance. As one respondent pointed out, 'If the technical assistance element is removed, then the Commonwealth Secretariat will become too preachy'. This modality is extremely well appreciated by stakeholders and reflects various dimensions of sustainability:

- There is strong country ownership built into the selection process, whereby the Secretariat's Technical Assistance Unit (TAU) does the initial recruitment and submits a shortlist to the member country for their selection, interview and appointment. Clear terms of reference (ToRs) are developed in partnership with the member country, and TAU is active in holding LTEs to their ToRs.

- TAU fields senior-level specialists in response to demand for support based on member country priority developmental challenges. Supply is limited, so there is careful consideration of the areas of greatest request by the member country. LTEs are then embedded in a host ministry or institution, working closely with counterparts.

- TAU engages in brokering and referral work when it is unable to fund expert placement. For example, Seychelles requested Commonwealth Secretariat support for two magistrates. CFTC contacted the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States court and linked them with the chief justice to recruit under their own budgets.

Box 6.1 Capacity development example

The senior trade adviser led the team from behind. He was not a key leader in the negotiations. Rather, he provided guidance and advice to the team and allowed them to take the lead in the meetings. He would train them in one-on-one sessions and in small groups prior to important meetings, and would review and provide key inputs into important documents, but he was not the one to draft them. This method proved fruitful because it made the team a very successful team of negotiators. He was able to build their long-term capacity and input into the successful accession to the WTO.

Project Completion Report: SEY0587 Institutional Strengthening, Aug 2015

- Sixty (60) per cent of assistance is provided on a South–South basis.[27]

- LTE placement is extended should withdrawal threaten results. For example, the placement of the Attorney-General to The Bahamas was extended to embed policy and implementation deliverables, and institutionalisation of the work.

- Any assignment longer than two years requires cost-sharing by the member country. (For example, member countries provide 50 per cent of salary costs, while the Secretariat supports package costs).

- LTEs play the role of catalysts and bridges to other sources of resources, support and/ or collaboration for the organisations where they work, capitalising on their personal professional networks.

Rule of law and independence of the judiciary in Vanuatu:

A judge who was previously seconded to the Vanuatu Supreme Court by the Secretariat made one of the most high-profile and impactful rulings in the history of the country. The country's first female judge, she sentenced 15 Members of Parliament to prison on charges of corruption. This judgement was highly endorsed by the general public and all stakeholders consulted were convinced that it set a precedent that will significantly curb corruption among public officials long into the future. 'The prosecution was done methodologically and comprehensively. The trial judge held her ground. She's become a bit of a folk hero in the way she dealt with the MPs', reported a High Commissioner based in Port Vila.

Blue Economy work in Seychelles:

Seychelles applied for a CFTC-funded technical adviser to assist with implementation of the Blue Economy Roadmap, and technical support has been provided by the LTE – whose key deliverable is to turn the concept note into a fully-fledged roadmap. Strong complementary technical support is provided by ONR, which maintains a keen interest, offering practical insights via quarterly teleconferences; these are regarded as 'backstopping which is really needed'. Working closely with the Minister/Principle Secretary of the Blue Economy to secure ownership of the Blue Economy initiative by the government, the LTE is considered 'more than an counterpart'.

The Secretariat has also committed to field two additional CFTC-funded short-term experts, and the government is considering the most pressing needs to be addressed. The challenge is for Seychelles to move beyond ocean governance as tourism and fisheries, which it has been doing for 200 years, and towards a Blue Economy national strategy – which sees the ocean as a development space.

Climate Finance Knowledge Hub in the Pacific region:

As confirmed by a four-month scoping study conducted for the 'Supporting Climate Finance Readiness and Access in the Pacific' project, the Climate Finance Knowledge Hub is designed to respond to the absence of a strong and permanent, sustainably-funded regional resource to address needs. Its flexible design should enable it to be applied at a smaller scale or in a variety of locations/ contexts – even beyond Commonwealth countries. To promote sustainability, this initiative will place advisers in regional organisations with the mandate of documenting lessons and strengthening knowledge management, with feedback loops to feedback into the Commonwealth's work. The models for accessing funding will be tailored to countries and scalable, with adaptation to other contexts.

Placement of Supreme Court judges in Seychelles:

Two judges placed in Seychelles Supreme Court by the Secretariat have helped to stabilise and modernised the judiciary. The introduction of the Computerised Case Administration System Seychelles (CCASS) has vastly improved the processing and management of court cases, as well as transparency. Prior to CCASS, the courts were said to be providing 'a very expensive, slow form of justice'. The Commonwealth judges have also contributed to improvements in sentencing practices. They were instrumental in reviewing the Misuse of Drugs Act and advising the committee that set up the tribunal, which helped reduce the large backlog of criminal cases. In addition, the Secretariat's sentencing guidelines have provided a valuable 'best practice'. These are examples of how systems have been strengthened that will continue to benefit the court, even after the judges (LTEs) are gone. In addition, the two judges were selected for their independence to sit as members of the constitutional court to hear an election petition,[28] a massively significant case with lots of public intrigue. Five rulings were handed

down, including one that was instrumental for Seychelles' constitutional law. As a result of the case, recommendations were made for legal guidelines for elections regulations – and this legislation was implemented within months. This in turn strengthened the separation of power, 'a tremendous legacy, from the jurisprudence point of view'.

Placement of Supreme Court judge in Vanuatu:

Capacity and professional ethics of the Bar are extremely weak in Vanuatu, which negatively affects quality and efficient delivery during trials, increasing the time taken on both simple and complicated cases. In an attempt to address this significant capacity gap, and as an additional benefit to his work, the Supreme Court judge appointed by the Secretariat makes an explicit effort to advise/ educate lawyers while in trial and to set higher standards for rule of law. As such, capacity is built through jurisprudence, as the judgements the Commonwealth judges hand down bring in an international feel and more nuanced approach.

Country strategies with longer-term commitments:

In Vanuatu, both the Commonwealth Secretariat and the New Zealand (NZ) High Commission provide a judge within the Supreme Court. To date, the support has not been particularly sustainable, in that the two organisations fund a position for a certain number of years – but there is neither training support nor any formal transition plan for the seconded staff. Rather than support the costs of this position indefinitely, with no specific outputs or end date, NZ is interested in exploring ways to provide more sustainable support. For instance, it would consider collaborating with the Secretariat on longer-term programmes to build capacity of future professionals working in the field of justice, to address the major gap in skilled lawyers and judges in the country. Yet NZ emphasised the need for the Secretariat to communicate its strategy and priorities for the country.

Regional approaches to technical assistance/ expert placement:

Several LTEs highlighted opportunities for expanding the impact of the Secretariat's work, by using regional or subregional approaches to technical assistance, rather than exclusively placing experts at the national level. For example, apparently there is a highly competent core of legislative drafters in Jamaica, and a LTE based there called it a potential 'breeding ground' for new legislative drafters in the region. According to this respondent, the model used by the Hubs and Spokes programme should be replicated, with regional hubs that have experts based in one place, yet offering technical assistance to multiple countries. 'This is more sustainable a model than having someone based in one jurisdiction'.

National frameworks for health and other areas:

All member countries have agreed to undertake universal healthcare, and agreements have been documented by the UN. According to project staff, the Secretariat could potentially bring value through a hands-on approach, addressing challenges by convening countries at different levels of development and implementation, to learn from each other, then to pilot approaches and support them until they are operational and scalable (i.e., until it has become a sustainable model).

6.2 Models and enabling factors of sustainability

Throughout the evaluation process, several enabling factors for sustainability were identified in the work of Secretariat. These include the following:

- Long-term relationships and commitment to a specific country and/or programme. Examples of where this exists in the organisation include:

  - Debt management: This is a long-term Secretariat programme with strong country interest. This longer-term engagement requires the team to track the situation on an ongoing basis.

  - ONR: This team at the Secretariat engages with a country from the start of a strategy or policy-making process. It is involved in the negotiations (e.g., about maritime boundaries) through to the conclusion, which can take many years, even decades.

- Reliable financing: Financial commitment/ investment beyond a single project cycle.

- Ownership-building, in particular with government, and engagement at the country level: by supporting local staff and empowering the country to get the work done itself, the work will be more likely to continue beyond the Secretariat's direct involvement.

Box 6.2 Example of sustainability efforts at the Supreme Court in Vanuatu

The master of the court at Vanuatu's Supreme Court – a new position filled by a Secretariat LTE – is proactively engaged in setting up systems and building capacity to promote the sustainability of her work. Due to her interventions, cases have become court-driven, rather than attorney-driven. She has further improved the situation by helping to set up a system to track the status of each case, which triggers pursuit of lawyers for Consent Orders and action plans with timelines.

Previously, the number of cases being brought to trial was unnecessarily high due to a lack of awareness of mediation. At the request of the chief justice, the master is increasingly taking on mediation, and most experiences have been successful. In fact, lawyers are now requesting mediation and judges are more inclined to refer matters for mediation.

As there is no disciplinary committee in the country, the court has the responsibility to deal with lawyers who breach professional standards. In an attempt to build capacity, the master has provided training to the Bar, covering professional ethics and other areas. The court is in the process of trying to recruit a deputy master of the court, who will be trained and mentored by the master.

The caveat to this example is that only the mentoring of the deputy master is an explicit part of the master's ToRs. All other activities are personal initiatives. For sustainability to be more systematically applied across the CFTC's work, it needs to be built into the ToRs of the long-term experts – so that sustainability becomes an integral and mandatory aspect of their assignments. Another conclusion is that the duration of the LTEs' contracts must be reasonably long enough for them to be able to undertake both the 'core' day-to-day work and efforts to strengthen systems and transfer knowledge and skills.

- Cross-sectoral efforts and involvement of diverse stakeholders (the public sector, private sector, civil society).

- Regional hubs for technical assistance (such as the regional adviser previously based in Fiji or regional trade experts under the Hubs and Spokes programme). Regional approaches offer more cost-effective solutions for tailored technical assistance, while enabling longer-term support that is not limited by the duration of a single LTE contract or a small project based on a request from a member country. **Note**: This was not only suggested by several government partners and LTEs, but also featured among the recommendations in the preliminary report of the Africa Anti-Corruption Evaluation, which mentioned a potential network of regional centres that could help identify regional development leaders and facilitate the dissemination of good practice.

- A focus on documentation of lessons, knowledge management and exchange, to promote learning across the Commonwealth community.

- Support to assess needs, design tailored responses, and pilot them for implementation and scale-up. This involves mainstreaming good ideas/practices and supporting projects that demonstrate results.

- Being more process-oriented/system-oriented as an institution, rather than people-oriented. Given the Secretariat's relatively high staff turnover, the risk of resources being inefficiently used on re-training and re-creation of tools/systems is high.

6.3 Risks/threats to sustainability

The *Evaluation of Secretariat's Training Programme* (undertaken in 2010) found that, despite the presence of commitment and motivation to

building capacity in a range of thematic areas in member countries, the likelihood of the Secretariat making a sustainable impact was seriously hampered by a general lack of understanding of best practice approaches in capacity development. A 2013 Meta-Evaluation conducted by SPED also found that short, one-off training events are a major factor contributing to unsustainability of programmes and organisational deficiency. The 2010 evaluation report made clear and strong recommendations in this regard:

- 'A Commonwealth Secretariat-wide approach to capacity development, including the role of training in capacity development, is adopted based on recognised best practice and current best practice within the Commonwealth Secretariat.'

- 'Training takes place only as part of a wider capacity development programme, which supports an enabling environment with the institutional and technical capacity to implement.'

The recent 2016 Meta-Evaluation notes that these recommendations have been reinforced time and time again in numerous evaluations that have taken place since 2010, including *The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment: 2007–2015* and the *Country Evaluation of Solomon Islands*, 2014.

Furthermore, the following risks or threats to sustainability were ascertained from the interviews.

Lack of emphasis on sustainable approaches to member country support. Specific examples are cited below:

- A key criticism of technical assistance is that it may simply be filling a gap where trained locals are unavailable, thus ultimately undermining local capacity development and disadvantaging local job seekers. This is a risk that will need to be closely monitored by TAU. Capacity development is a critical vehicle for providing technical co-operation, while encouraging local ownership, enabling learning from, and building on, specialist external knowledge, and thus contributing to reciprocal change and sustainable development. While the above examples highlight some potentially sustainable work being supported, many arose from the personal initiative of the stakeholders (e.g., LTEs) and the capacity development efforts they undertook were

above and beyond their required ToRs. In some cases, the quality of impact of the LTE may depend on the extent to which they can successfully build relationships and influence the working environment. A further issue raised by LTEs was the lack of budget support to extend the impact and sustainability of their work.

- The final evaluation of the CCP (2015) shows that the Secretariat's work evolved into a project-implementing agency – one where the CCP's mandate became primarily that of identifying and financing projects, even though consensus was reached that the programme should act as a broker and catalyst. The call for project applications issued under the programme served to raise expectations regarding the funding of projects, giving the impression that the CCP was more about funding than brokerage. Nearly all the projects financed 'died a natural death' once the grant was exhausted. The result was that expectations were raised among the communities that benefitted from the projects, and these could no longer be met once the grant was over.

- There have been significant critiques of aid through technical assistance over the last decade, by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and others. Problems identified include: a lack of ownership by hosts; the dominance of a hierarchical expert paradigm that underestimates local skills and the importance of adaptation to local circumstances; inadequate proportions of women; and ambiguous accountabilities for technical officers.[29] The dilemma is vividly captured by one respondent, 'The Secretariat sends someone who is effective from the get-go. But most other organisations just send short-term consultants to advise other consultants. Then nothing comes out of it. As the saying goes, they are like seagulls: fly in make a lot a noise, make a mess everywhere, then fly out. I was worried the Secretariat might go in that direction, but fortunately, they haven't'. This emphasises the importance of the approach used to provide technical assistance, and how critical long-term relationships and follow-up support are – as well as how critical it is to avoid supply-led, rather than demand-led technical assistance.

Box 6.3 Risks to sustainability of rule of law in small island states

With Commonwealth judges playing a capacity gap-filling role in Seychelles, one concern is that of sustainability, and the effectiveness of capacity transfer. In the absence of any training and mentoring plan, the judges have not conducted formal training or mentoring of junior judges. Informal capacity transfer takes place through the monthly judges meeting, but capacity is developed mainly through jurisprudence, i.e. the judgements the Commonwealth judges hand down bringing a nuanced international feel. The Secretariat has been supportive in helping Seychelles recruit internationally – for example, of an East African magistrate. However, support from the Secretariat on judicial training would be extremely useful to offer capacity strengthening for existing judges in areas such as legal research, judgement writing and ethics.

Likewise in Vanuatu, a lack of qualified legal capacity has posed significant challenges to filling the positions that the Secretariat has agreed to fund within the Supreme Court. The chief justice states that long-term capacity development for judges must be addressed for the sustainability of Secretariat interventions, and a joint approach to capacity development collaboration between the Secretariat and the NZ High Commission is being called for.

- In the light of persistence of valid queries about the efficacy and appropriateness of overseas technical assistance, the Secretariat will need to actively monitor its approach to ensure sustainability.

The short-term, limited lifecycle of projects. The Secretariat's short-term focus (limited to the duration of an expert's contract, for instance) is reported to inhibit its ability to think strategically and position itself as a potential longer-term partner in the development of a country. For instance:

- The Secretariat's LTE serving as master of the court in Vanuatu is charged with training and mentoring a local staff member, and she estimates needing at least one year of mentoring to be able to adequately prepare the person to take on the role as deputy master.

- One Secretariat-supported Supreme Court judge articulated the need for adequate time to be able to make a difference: 'As a judge, you spend the first few months getting into the way things are done. The next six months, you start to have trials. After one year, you are finally able to organise them. Then in the last year, you have to wind down because you have to leave. Two years seems like a long time when you start… but then when [you] get to the end, you wish you had two more years to finish what you started!'

- Securing local ownership also takes time – usually more than the standard two-year duration of a typical LTE. 'Sustainability: This is where my job is complicated', reports one LTE. She believes that it would take a minimum of two years just to secure the initial government buy-in necessary to achieve the project's outputs.

- One contributing partner reported that there have been instances of inadequate close-out planning and longer-term strategic vision with regards to successor programmes, and how to secure the legacy of the technical advisers supported by programmes that have been implemented for more than a decade (such as Hubs and Spokes II).

Short-term commitment horizons and lack of longer-term programming strategies. Respondents in Vanuatu – both national High Commissions and government partners – highlighted what appears to be a lack of strategic thinking regarding future programming. With interventions designed around immediate country requests and based on short- to medium-term contracts with experts, the opportunities for longer-term partnerships and a more holistic and impactful work are often missed. This is also confirmed by the ongoing Africa Anti-Corruption Evaluation, for which the preliminary findings included recommendations that the Secretariat:

- develop a properly articulated broad-based long-term strategy and programme of activity for anti-corruption, with a learning framework that is supported by performance M&E and financed by a variety of donors; and

- create and agree a donor development strategy.

Staff turnover. 'Rotation policies are the biggest threat to sustained capacity', according to a staff member at HQ. This is particularly true when the initiative is spearheaded by a single focal point – and when that person leaves, the institutional memory, ownership and momentum go with him/her, with a brand-new relationship having to be established – as well as buy-in secured – from scratch. For example: In Grenada, there hadn't been a legislative drafter for many years, so a Secretariat-supported drafter undertook training of three of them. Yet once the LTE position was no longer supported and the trained staff left the agency, there was no continuity of the capacity that had previously been built.

It should be noted that Secretariat-appointed long-term consultants operate at fees that are often below comparable market rates. So while the assistance provided by most Secretariat-appointed long-term experts has been highly effective and appreciated by the country, many leave their assignments before completion.[30]

Dependency on external support/experts. While this evaluation has demonstrated the value of long-term expert placement, some respondents pointed out the flip side of the equation: that placing expatriates in the field for extended periods can create institutional dependency within the ministry. There is also a strong risk of 'returning to square one', if no local counterparts are trained. Example: Now that the Supreme Court in Vanuatu has had a judge seconded by the Secretariat for many years, it is a position the court cannot do without it. 'The role is of vital importance to the smooth running of the system. If the person leaves now, everything achieved in terms of clearing backlogs, conducting case management and mediation work will go back to the way it was before. In fact, it could be worse because judges [are] disaccustomed to new roles and dependent on this position', said one respondent.

Limited access to affordable finance. Example: Seychelles' status as a high-income country affects its ability to attract funds. Doing more with private sector funds to implement projects like marine special plans, protected areas, sustainable fishing and other elements of the Blue Economy requires some innovative thinking.

Limited governance/institutional capacity in public sector agencies. Member countries may lack strong, formalised implementation mechanisms for strategic planning, reporting, administration and other aspects of government business. Example: According to one respondent in Seychelles, the country has policy/legislation in place, but it faces challenges in getting them 'off the shelf' and applied. In brief, there's a large institutional capacity need – and few donors/development partners tend to support that kind of work.

6.4 Recommendations for sustainability

1. Ensure that sustainability is built into Secretariat work at all levels – i.e., in the Strategic Plan regarding high-level organisational approaches, at departmental level regarding long-term programmes and at project level regarding Project Design Documents (PDDs). To increase the chance of sustained benefits and expand the impact of the Secretariat's work, it is critical that every assignment be examined using a 'sustainability lens' and that actions to promote sustainable inputs/results be built into the project design or experts' ToRs. Quality assurance and reporting should explicitly address sustainability as a key criterion/dimension. A corporate-wide sustainability strategy and/or Commonwealth Secretariat strategy would also be worthwhile.

2. The Secretariat should consider addressing the common issue of short-term commitment horizons (e.g., interventions conducted solely through a contract with a LTE, support limited to a four-year project), which are a real obstacle for more strategic thinking, longer-term planning and ongoing partnerships. This may involve a shift toward subregional and regional models for collaboration and delivery, to expand reach and increase impact while finding cost-efficiencies.

7. Key lessons learnt

This section is intended to synthesise what should be done the same or differently in future Strategic Plan design and implementation. As is good practice, these lessons are intended as 'generalisations based on evaluation experiences … that abstract from the specific circumstances to broader situations'.[31]

1. Strategic Plan development/consultation must be strongly owned and managed

Fostering a participatory, consultative process to develop a SP is important, yet can be challenging and time-consuming. As an inter-governmental organisation, it will not be feasible for a small, insider group to develop the Secretariat's plan with limited consultation. If consultations are limited to senior-level staff, Board members and high-level political representatives of member countries, then technical perspectives relating to delivery may be overlooked. Yet without clear parameters and careful management of the consultation process, the diverse interests of members may become entrenched. Once key priorities are mapped via the SP, executive staff must be clearly authorised and must lead strongly on the definition of the operational plan within a given budget, making strategic decisions about compromises.

From an organisational development perspective, the budget is a tool to help force SP prioritisation in a context of a large 'wish list' and wide range of interests from diverse stakeholders. However, linking strategic planning to funding availability may restrict the ambition of the Secretariat to achieve results beyond the current purse of the membership. If the Secretariat is realistic with its ambition in the SP, the operational plan can be married with the resource mobilisation plan to deliver 'as much as possible'. Creativity around partnering and resourcing will need to drive Secretariat sustainability for the future.

2. For SP implementation to be effective, it is critical that the SP documents reflect reality or that implementation adheres to the SP.

The actual scaling back of programmes has been less dramatic than the numbers would suggest, as much ongoing work was 'repackaged', with micro-projects regrouped into a smaller portfolio of larger projects. Yet the development of larger programmes (Intermediate Outcomes [IOs]) has brought more efficiency to project design, review and approval processes, reduced the corporate reporting burden, and allowed increased flexibility in programming use of funds to respond to evolving needs or contexts. Historically, programming has been solely driven by member countries' requests, more so than by strategic vision and organisational priorities, due to the political nature of the organisation. The vague scope of some IOs still allows 'pet projects' or member country requests that fall outside the SP to be 'fitted in' retrospectively.

Conversely, some of the Secretariat's core work could be more explicit in the SP and more adequately captured in the PMIS. This includes the CMDF and work of the Conference Section (i.e., the important convening role that the Secretariat plays in organising CHOGM, ministerial meetings etc.)

3. The identity of the Secretariat has been contested thorough the dichotomising of the democracy and development narratives, yet the combination of these is part of the Secretariat's unique value proposition (UVP).

The division between democracy/political work and development evolved over years within the Secretariat and became entrenched in the SP consultation process. Yet the spheres of influence of the two 'sides of the house' are inter-twined and the two wings have great potential to mutually reinforce each other and increase impact. Exploration of the synergies, opportunities and mutual inter-relations of these two pillars would clarify and strengthen the Secretariat's identity – both internally and with member countries. The Secretariat's reputation is strongest in association with 'democracy and governance' work, due to its apolitical/neutral position, close access to high-level government officials and long track record in this area; and many stakeholders opine that bilateral development partners and NGOs are better suited to 'development' work. However, the Secretariat's UVP lies its ability to combine the development and democracy narratives.

4. **The historical association and shared values of the Commonwealth strengthen the sense of conviction of the difference the Secretariat can make**.

The historical context of the Commonwealth association, whereby members share values and principles, represents a free choice into which member countries can opt in or out. Member countries might disagree on certain issues, but they have made a clear political commitment to advance the Commonwealth. The Secretariat's direct interaction with Heads of State is a special feature, and other players cannot emulate this 'special relationship', 'direct line' and ability to influence. Member countries value the lack of conditionality attached to Secretariat funding, and its capacity to empower governments across different technical areas. The Secretariat is also well recognised for its important role in giving SIDS a voice in global matters and strengthening their development.

5. **Organisational restructuring that is integrated with the SP development process poses fewer risks for implementation.**

Redundancies or recruitment that is streamlined with SP approval will allow human resources to be appropriately aligned to the SP and adequate for delivering all that it promises. Decoupling the responsibilities of restructuring from the strategic planning process created space for Directors/ Heads to lobby based on self-preservation and resulted in inconsistency in the staffing plan. If the Secretariat had conducted a systematic review and upgrading of critical ICT prior to the restructuring, it may have brought efficiencies and productivity to down-sized functions.

6. **Silo working undermines the Secretariat's ability to become more than the sum of its parts**

Despite a few examples of strong Divisional co-operation, overall an organisational culture has developed based on silos (units, sections, divisions) that are at best unco-ordinated and at worse competitive. This manifests itself in staff engagement in and with member countries, presenting a reputational risk. Likewise, the collaboration of LTEs and consultants is not facilitated. If this situation were reversed, cross-fertilisation between the Secretariat's technically diverse and expert pool of staff/consultants would foster innovative responses to member country

challenges. The co-ordination between the Technical Assistance Unit (TAU) and programmatic areas delivery on the SO teams is a rare example of harmonised working across divisions.

7. **Institutionalising RBM requires ownership at all levels of the organisation.**

For effective delivery and reporting of results by project/technical staff, there is a need for leadership and accountability at the level of each Division/ Section/Unit – so that RBM processes and results are not perceived as only belonging to SPED. Institutionalisation of an RBM culture will require staff at all levels (including DSGs and Directors/ Heads) to drive the systematic application of the agreed processes and tools for RBM functions. PMIS does not have to be the 'do all, be all' solution for RBM – exercises such as risk analysis/ mitigation and data analysis/learning tend to be more effectively carried out through participatory processes rather than IT-based systems. While most staff acknowledge that the Secretariat has made great strides in rolling out RBM over the past few years, in the context of reputational risk and funding cuts, it is essential that the Secretariat seeks ways to showcase its RBM efforts and culture to external stakeholders.

8. **As the largest and best-resourced of the Commonwealth organisations, the Secretariat is expected to proactively facilitate the collaboration of the Commonwealth family.**

If the Secretariat's engagement of significant Commonwealth organisations becomes more systematic and proactive, it is well placed to lead the development of a joint agenda for the Commonwealth as a whole and catalyse a coalescing around the Commonwealth brand. Commonwealth organisations desire co-ordination and planning with the Secretariat, to formalise synergies, identify common talking points and plan for systematic championing of the Commonwealth.

9. **In order to respond to the SDGs effectively, gender will need to be better integrated into the SP.**

The aspirational commitment in the Secretariat's strategies, structures and systems does not transpose to the SP, where gender is weakly featured. The presentation of gender as a single project within the Social Development SO risks undermining the Secretariat's mainstreaming

efforts. A body of data on gender outcomes should emerge with: stronger application of a 'gender lens' in problem and stakeholder analyses during project design; quality assurance of PDDs to ensure they contain a meaningful gender component (beyond just a 'tick-box' exercise); and effective reporting on gender through stronger gender-specific and gender-mainstreaming indicators and reporting requirements.

10. **The Secretariat lacks visibility, since communication of the SP to stakeholders is weak.**

Few development partners, donors or government officials in member countries (including the Secretariat's PCPs) are familiar with the SP or aware of the full spectrum of Secretariat engagement. CHOGM, ministerial meetings and informal, ad hoc encounters with staff and consultants are presently the main channels by which stakeholders learn about the Secretariat's work and strategic priority areas. If stakeholders are not aware of the Secretariat's strategy and depth and breadth of engagement, then the organisation will likely be overlooked as a go-to partner or funding recipient. In order for the Secretariat to achieve value for money and maximise resources, opportunities for collaboration and engagement in strategic partnerships will need to be better explored.

11. **The Secretariat has a strong reputation with many respondents, despite limited funds.**

Member countries find that the Secretariat is a niche agency for support on tailored requests and specific activities. It was reported to offer more technical expertise then other agencies, with staff being responsive and collaborative. Compared to the UN 'who dictates more', the Secretariat is said to listen, enrich the request, and offer South–South co-operation, contextual knowledge and a high-quality response. The Secretariat is found to be highly effective at facilitating national and regional networking – in seeking to understand the focus at the national level and trying to engage all stakeholders on issues and challenges, bringing all parties to the table.

8. Recommendations

Due to the wide scope of the evaluation, 39 strategic and operational recommendations were generated, as documented below. Due to the broad scope of the evaluation and the raft of organisation-wide strategic and operational emergent recommendations, the evaluators did not elicit recommendations in relation to specific technical areas of the Secretariat's work.

A. Strategic Plan development/consultation process

1. Look strategically at the geopolitical interests of member countries in future consultation rounds, including communities such as BRICS and SADC. Consider feedback from PCPs, technical staff, ministries, partners/contributors and Commonwealth organisations; and actively plan for management of member country expectations within future consultation processes.

2. Make financial forecasting and budgeting an integral part of the process of developing the new SP, taking place at the same time the outcomes are defined and involving a common team. Develop an accompanying Operational/Delivery Plan, in order that funding allocation be used as a key criterion for determining project priorities and staffing levels.

B. Design/coherence of the Strategic Plan

3. Given budget constraints, there should be a 'real' reduction in the number of work areas – or else the scope of each IO should be reduced. If resources remain the same or decline in the next SP period, this should be reflected by an actual decline in the number of work areas in the Delivery Plan.

4. Focus efforts on determining the organisation's technical/programming priorities in the next four years (and beyond), to maximise impact while optimising limited resources. Target future programming on areas of comparative advantages and UVP – such as small states, democracy and governance, policy and legal reform, judiciary/rule of law, and human rights. Revise the SOs to be more focused and to represent changes to which the Secretariat can feasibly contribute as well as observe – and then report them during the SP period.

5. Ensure that the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) clearly articulates the various levels of change that the Secretariat can realistically bring about; and that Strategic Outcomes (impact) proposed are sufficiently attributable to the Secretariat's work. The SDGs and priorities of the Commonwealth Charter then represent the 'super-goal' or ultimate impact of the Secretariat's work – at an even higher level than SOs.

6. Revise the term used to describe the impact-level results (SOs), to more clearly distinguish the desired impact from the intended outcomes, e.g., they could be called 'Goals' to avoid the impression that they refer to the same level of result as the IOs. Likewise, correctly label groups of various projects as 'programmes', and develop corresponding 'programme' key performance indicators (KPIs).

7. Ensure that all projects/initiatives fit within the SP and can be reported against it going forward. Discourage approval of member country requests that do not align with the agreed priorities.

8. Ensure that IOs are consistent in their size and scope, across the various pillars, by eliminating some and consolidating others. Formulate new IOs which better articulate the Secretariat's USP and comparative advantages, and provide measurable medium-term results against which to track and report results using routine monitoring and periodic review. New IOs could focus on the immediate results from the main products and services that the Secretariat offers, relevant to multiple SOs – i.e., policy reform, legislative drafting/legal frameworks, trade agreements, election observation, needs assessments, advocacy work, the Secretarial

role of convening important large meetings, establishment of knowledge hubs or funds (for climate financing) etc.

9. Clarify responsibility, ownership and accountability for each Enabling Outcome, and:

    a. make 'Gender' an Enabling Outcome, so that it can be mainstreamed more effectively;

    b. retain 'Technical Assistance' as cross-cutting theme, yet consider highlighting partnerships separately;

    c. harmonise Divisional projects/PDDs for advocacy into one global advocacy strategy, with corresponding subprojects, under which reporting on ministerial meetings may be captured;

    d. showcase more explicitly the convening work that is a major aspect of the Secretariat's mandate; and make visible the important consensus-building role of the Secretariat by including it as an Enabling Outcome in the new SP;

    e. develop a Knowledge Management Framework and system to consolidate and strengthen this important area and clarify accountabilities and budget; and consider broadening the portfolio to encompass evaluation and learning, which are critical elements of RBM; and

    f. emphasise 'innovation' as another important cross-cutting theme.

10. In terms of Internal Outcomes:

    g. refine the category of financial and non-financial corporate services, which encompasses a wide range of different types of services, to facilitate corporate service reporting to the SP;

    h. ensure greater prominence to communication and visibility in the next SP; and

    i. quality and results might be more appropriate as an Enabling Outcome, given the important link of RBM, planning and ME&R with knowledge management.

j. Look to combine multiple member country requests into a single response, such as regional training in response to several capacity development requests from various countries. This would not necessarily entail limiting the requests, but having a different approach to the Request Register.

C. Strategic Plan alignment/linkages with broader agendas

12. Prioritise SDG targets where the Secretariat can make the most difference and where other organisations are not already working, including the interface between different SDGs. In addition to aligning with the goals/targets of global results frameworks, the Secretariat may look to ensure that its work adheres to the principles and commitments agreed as part of the global agenda; and review how the various projects/programmes align with member countries' National Development Plans.

D. Organisational structure and cross-divisional collaboration

13. Ensure strong leadership and executive decision-making for prioritisation of delivery areas and staffing decisions within the Secretariat; and conduct a short, sharp restructuring process. Allow each department to provide input and suggestions on the revised organigram, but retain final decisions for the person/team charged with co-ordinating the SP design and budgeting processes.

14. Put in place an incentives system to encourage interdisciplinary working and break down some of the organisational siloes that persist, e.g., within Performance Management Plans. Introduce improved mechanisms for sharing budgets, implement regular cross-divisional SMG meetings, and seize opportunities for integration and synergies between similar areas, such as youth and social development (education/health/gender) and economic growth/trade and small states' resilience.

15. Conduct a thorough review of all projects in-country at the outset of all future Secretariat engagement with member

countries, with an eye to opportunities for collaborative co-ordination, to enhance the effectiveness of assistance and maximise its impact. Pilot joint project monitoring by advisers to minimise project operational costs, increase efficiency and improve regular communications, e.g., nominate one Division to act as 'country representative' for a member country. Consider a mechanism of country strategies for either all member countries or those identified as priority countries during the next SP period.

E. Results-based management (RBM)

16. Build on investment in the online course on RBM and gender mainstreaming for staff, by examining other effective approaches to continuous professional development that represent good value for money. An expanded e-learning package, combined with a strong new-staff induction package and periodic in-house face-to-face trainings/refreshers, will likely be needed on an ongoing basis to keep staff up-to-date on evolving RBM trends and enhanced organisational tools and processes. Make RBM training (including PMIS orientation) mandatory for technical and corporate staff, and not just at the discretion of each Director/Head.

17. Conduct a formal review of PMIS in collaboration with users, and develop a plan to improve the capacity of the system to serve staff needs. Commission a working group of project managers and Operations Officers to inform the development of the SP. Make the interface more user-friendly by eliminating the need for manual reconciliation of financial information, reducing the number of levels/ windows, and making page/tab headings more self-explanatory. Limit ME&R requirements to the most essential and meaningful quantitative and qualitative data collection. Extend PMIS systemic capacity to enable country-level disaggregation.

18. The organisation must have a system that responds to corporate demands for strategic, high-level information, while at the same time providing more detailed information that supports operations and delivery. Mandatory data requirements on SOs and IOs can exist alongside optional tools for

lower levels. Introduce complementary tools and processes for lower-level planning, management and monitoring to address the recurring problem with underspend and the Secretariat's financial management weaknesses – as perceived by the EU and perhaps other partners.

19. Enhance TAU reporting templates[32] to allow for qualitative description, reporting on unintended outcomes or work beyond their ToRs; and to explain numbers, tell success stories and share descriptive lessons.

20. Allocate formal responsibility for the quality assurance function within the organisation, which incorporates quality assurance of quality project design, context analysis and gender mainstreaming.

21. Prioritise organisational learning through strengthened linkages between evaluation and planning, monitoring and reporting. Introduce a policy/strategy and mechanism for organisational learning and commit adequate resources to evaluation, especially ex-post impact evaluation. Pilot 'evaluative monitoring' via periodic results-informed reviews at the programme/project and Divisional levels, including for good practices for ministerial meetings., such as the peer review of PDDs and quarterly Performance Scans by divisions; these should be institutionalised so that all teams are systematically applying them.

F. Gender mainstreaming

22. Redouble efforts to operationalise gender mainstreaming within the organisation, supported by a clear practical operational plan to guide implementation and embed gender in programming in practice. Strengthen systems for ME&R and organisational learning on gender, and roll-out mandatory basic gender training.

23. Emphasise gender as an enabling outcome in the SP, including both gender-specific indicators (for gender-focused projects) and integrated, gender-related indicators (for gender mainstreaming across sectoral projects) in the SRF associated with the new SP.

24. Recruit advisory-level staff with both RBM and gender skills to the Gender Section, to serve as an interface between gender and divisions and to play a quality assurance role.

G. Internal operations in support of SP delivery

25. Make concerted efforts to meet the requirements of the EU's '7 Pillars Assessment', which is a good governance/ management audit required for accessing additional types of funding. Many of the EU-funded Hubs and Spokes programme's beneficiaries – such as the secretariats of COMESA, SADC and CARICOM – have graduated from the '7 Pillars Assessment', suggesting that the channelling of financial support through the Secretariat is becoming less necessary.

26. Acquire an enterprise-wide application to bring together HR, finance and procurement, as well as ME&R data. In particular, it is recommended that integration of PMIS and the financial system be prioritised, as well as the streamlining of reports from HR, IT and finance, in order to reduce the amount of manual reconciliation in PMIS and duplicative efforts in tracking and reporting information across the organisation. One option for consideration is to replace CODA with an ERP system, and new streamlined processes to match.

27. Establish a process for regular tracking and documentation of the status of recommendations, such as KPGM audits, EPG recommendations and evaluation studies.

28. Define the 'satisfactory' spending rate for each quarter, to strengthen the interpretation of burn rates and/or thresholds for performance, as well as establish a system for flagging consistent underspending.

29. Develop and implement a communications strategy for the dissemination of the new SP, which aims to inform all member countries, staff, Commonwealth organisations, potential donors and other partners of the Secretariat's strategic priorities, strategies and specific role/mandate (while emphasising its USP and comparative advantages, as well as reinforcing the 'Commonwealth brand').

Strengthen the work under the SP component of 'Increased understanding of SP among member countries and partners facilitated'. Facilitate close collaboration between the Communications Division (COM) and SPED, as well as greater integration between the quantitative data/numbers with the qualitative information/stories.

30. Ensure that member countries' requests are managed in a consistent manner, with regular communication to the PCPs.

H. Partnerships and collaboration

31. Finalise the corporate-wide Partnership Strategy and fast-track its implementation, including a large component on strategic communications and visibility. Introduce a centralised database of key contacts (i.e., PCPs, contributing partner focal points, LTEs etc.), develop protocols for its active updating, and assign responsibilities for relationship management to specific staff members.

32. Review the approach that all joint working must be channelled through the dedicated focal point of the Secretariat liaison manager/ partnerships officer, in order not to stifle collaboration and limit relationship building between technical counterparts in respective organisations.

33. Operationalise the EPG vision of strengthened collaboration, co-ordination and joint planning among Commonwealth organisations. The Secretariat should convene significant Commonwealth family members on a regular basis to discuss mandates, strengths, activities and mutual work plans; and institute consultative meetings with Commonwealth organisations at different levels, including at the Secretary-General and technical levels. Collaboration could include special task forces; working groups on specific issues; and forums prior to each CHOGM looking at how to synthesise learning and influence the CHOGM agenda.

34. Conduct an organisational SWOT analysis to identify areas of strength and comparative advantage, and locate this within mapping of other Commonwealth organisations and key stakeholders, to determine their mandates, comparative advantages and

programming priorities. This would provide important information on which organisations might be best placed to deliver on-the-ground programmes and would enable the identification of potential partnerships that could be leveraged to achieve greater impact. Based on the findings of this mapping exercise, Secretariat staff should be encouraged to see Commonwealth organisations as delivery partners, be aware of their mandates and be wary to duplicate or trespass on these.

I.   Member country-level benefits and results

35.   Establish a working group to look at the dichotomy of democracy/political work versus development work in-house, and develop an action plan and working group to promote synergies, opportunities and mutual inter-relations between the two pillars – e.g., through evaluation or research, by promoting and publicising cross-pillar initiatives, development of a counterpart system, etc.

36.   Increase efforts to capture and document the higher-order results (outcomes and impact) of projects/programmes. This will require going beyond six-monthly and annual reporting by LTEs and consultants, and utilising evaluative monitoring, reviews, and ex-ante evaluation.

37.   Instil proactive approaches to gender mainstreaming. Rather than awaiting member countries' requests for gender-specific support, the Secretariat should integrate gender into other projects, including the long-term experts' terms of reference.

J.   Sustainability

38.   Ensure that sustainability is built into Secretariat work at all levels – i.e., in the Strategic Plan regarding high-level organisational approaches, at the departmental level regarding long-term programmes, and at the project level for PDDs. To increase the chance of sustained benefits and expand the impact of the Secretariat's work, it is critical that every assignment be examined using a 'sustainability lens' and that actions to promote sustainable inputs/results be built into the project design or expert's ToRs. Quality assurance and reporting should explicitly address sustainability as a key criterion/dimension. A corporate-wide Sustainability Strategy and/or Commonwealth Secretariat Strategy would add value.

39.   The Secretariat should consider addressing the common issue of short-term commitment horizons (e.g., interventions conducted solely through a contract with a LTE, support limited to a four-year project etc.), which are a real obstacle to more strategic thinking, longer-term planning and ongoing partnerships. This may involve a shift toward subregional and regional models for collaboration and delivery, as a way to expand reach and increase impact while finding cost-efficiencies.

9. Conclusion

Overall, the evaluation found that the demand-driven, locally-tailored support provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat to member countries in response to their requests is appreciated. The member countries that were interviewed expressed that the Secretariat is an important, trusted partner that makes valuable contributions in both democracy and development, without any conditions/strings attached; and plays an important role as a neutral party in supporting sensitive political processes and reform, which they are not able to directly fund for political reasons.

The reputation of the Secretariat largely differs, however, depending on the specific audience. On one hand, small states and developing country members generally speak highly of the Secretariat and very much appreciate the voice that the Commonwealth helps to give them in the global arena. On the other hand, the larger, more developed countries – including the largest financial contributors – are more critical of the Secretariat and have been increasingly demanding evidence of its value addition. Several perceive that project/financial management at the Secretariat is weak and that RBM needs further strengthening, in order to demonstrate results and value for money – and these perceptions (along with funding constraints and political issues) have contributed to their decisions to reduce and/or withdraw funds to the CFTC.33

In terms of the design of the Strategic Plan and how the organisation's priorities/focus areas are articulated to member countries and the general public, it could be beneficial (in future SPs) to 'turn the current SP on its head' – and make Intermediate Outcomes focus on the Secretariat's main impact pathways (e.g., technical assistance, advocacy, knowledge management/exchange, convening/facilitation of conferences etc.) rather than on broad technical sectors such as democracy, public institutions, social development etc. This approach might: help stakeholders to better understand the Secretariat's mandate; promote cross-sectoral working and reduce damaging silos; and combat the impression of its implementing at the same level as UN agencies or other Commonwealth organisations. The higher-level impacts to which the Secretariat's work contributes could be represented by reference to the SDGs – to which the Intermediate Outcomes feed into, but for which the organisation is not responsible for directly measuring and reporting against.

The Secretariat will need to ensure that sustainability and impact drive the design of all interventions. In other words, sustainability should be embodied in all types of support that it provides to member countries. This may mean shifting the delivery approach from short-cycle projects to longer-term partnerships /multiyear programmes in member countries – and co-ordinating with other development agencies/donors to support country-level strategies.

The evaluators conclude that the current Strategic Plan is a significant step forward from previous iterations and that a lot of good work has gone into trying to optimise resources and maximise impact, particularly through explicit efforts to strengthen RBM within the organisation. While progress has been made, there is still a lot more to be done to embed a deep 'culture of results' and to institutionalise good practice. This may require taking hard decisions about prioritising the kinds of work the Secretariat supports in the future, involving additional scaling down of large projects and programmes and/or more 'sunsetting' of others. In doing so, the Secretariat should strive to consult a broad range of stakeholders (i.e. both high-level political representatives and more technical/programmatic stakeholders) to determine the greatest needs. The final priorities retained would then be based on factors such as: (1) the organisation's strengths and comparative advantages; (2) the organisation's unique niche, considering what other organisations are already doing, to avoid overlap/duplication/competition and to best direct resources; and (3) funding availability/constraints.

Annex A – Details of Methodology

1. Evaluation framework

The framework gave an overview of the evaluation criteria, the main issues and objectives to be addressed within each criteria area, and the key research questions within each area. Each question was tagged to the data collection methods and respondent groups wherein data was expected to be identified.

2. Data collection methods

Consultation and scoping visit

A scoping mission at the Secretariat's headquarters (HQ) office in London took place in September 2015, by CIDT's Ms Ella Haruna, Team Leader, and Ms Kimberly Kane, Principal Evaluator. The purpose was to hold preliminary discussions with key Secretariat respondents, to clarify the scope of the evaluation and inform the development of the Inception Report and the Evaluation Framework. This complemented the start-up call held in July with the Head of Evaluation, Ms Evelyn Ogwal Pederson, and the Technical Lead for the Strategic Plan, Ms Norma MacIsaac.

3. Secondary data collection

The evaluators were provided with a comprehensive set of documents by SPED. The types of documents consulted as part of the desk review include:

- the Commonwealth Secretariat's Charter, the current Strategic Plan and the revised SRF;

- recommendations from the Eminent Persons Group;

- pertinent records and data related to the strategic plan design, implementation, monitoring and reporting, including six-monthly progress reports and annual results reports;

- member country reviews of the Secretariat's performance during the period, such as DFID's annual report, *MARs and Multilateral Development Review* (MDR);

- reports of key evaluations conducted within the Strategic Plan period, including the MTR;

- various project documents pertaining to the eight (8) priority projects and the two (2) countries that were the focus of this evaluation;

- *Gender Equality Policy, Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines* for Project Planning and Gender Equality End-Term Review;

- samples of the Secretary-General's reports to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGMs);

- the Secretariat's RBM Guidelines and Framework, the PMIS and findings of the online survey of staff on RBM (2015 baseline report);

- KPMG audits of the Secretariat's Strategic and Business Planning Process and of Project Outcomes and Delivery;

- organisational charts (organigrams) from 2011–14 and 2015–16; and

- annual financial statements, presenting budget/contribution information.

In addition, CIDT sourced external documents pertaining to the SDGs and other information related to trends and priorities in the global agenda. Annex C provides the full list of documents reviewed.

4. Primary data collection

Primary data collection took place through the following methods: semi-structured interviews (SSIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). These approaches are detailed in the Inception Report.

Table A1 Number and type of interviews conducted

Stakeholders interviewed	Session type / number			Number of respondents
	Face-to-face	Virtual	Total	
Interviews/FGDs with Secretariat staff	21	1	22	53
Interviews with Commonwealth organisations, ex-staff and consultants	0	9	9	9
Interviews with stakeholders in Tier 1 countries:				
Vanuatu	12	0	12	14
Seychelles	17	4	21	24
Interviews with member country representatives in Tier 2 countries	0	9	9	9
TOTAL:	50	23	73	109

5. Sample projects

A sample of eight representative projects was selected by the Secretariat for further study, from which conclusions on performance and challenges across the portfolio were derived. The intention was not to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of each individual project; rather it was to compile case studies that produced concrete examples and relevant lessons. The selection criteria used by the Secretariat were presented in the Inception Report. Table A2 below lists the selected projects.

These eight projects feed into IOs within each SP pillar except Youth (for which a parallel evaluation is currently underway). Conclusions about tangible outputs achieved, the operationalisation of gender

Table A2 Sample of projects selected for this evaluation

No	Relevant IO	Project ID	Project title
1.	Elections (IR 1.3)	NPCWG0902	Strengthening Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions
2.	Human Rights (2.1)	NRCWG0973	Establishment, operationalisation and strengthening of National Human Rights Institutions
3.	Health (3.1)	NHCWG0925	Strengthening National Health Frameworks and Policies in the Commonwealth
4.	Trade (5.1)	NXCWG0898	Supporting Trade and Competitiveness in the Commonwealth
5.	Debt Management (5.3)	NXCWG0927	Strengthening Debt Management Capacity in member countries
6.	Climate Finance (6.3)	NBCWG0915	Improving Climate Finance Frameworks
7.	Technical Assistance (A.2)	NGCWG0921	Technical Assistance, referrals and partnerships mechanisms respond flexibly to member countries' needs and capacity development priorities
8.	Quality and Results (B.4)	NUCWG0943	Quality and Results in the new Strategic Plan

mainstreaming, and impact/outcomes brought about by the SP were largely informed by the findings gathered on these projects.

6. Logistics

The evaluation took place between July and November 2016 and the work plan can be found in the Inception Report. The guidance and support provided to the evaluators by SPED was superb. Full access was given to documentation in a timely manner, communications were clear and logistics went very smoothly. This was one of the key factors that enabled the evaluators to closely adhere to the original ambitious timeline.

Annex B – List of Respondents

A. Scoping visit to London office of Commonwealth Secretariat

Meeting with SPED:

1. Mr Nabeel Goheer, Director

2. Ms Evelyn Ogwal, Head of Evaluation

3. Ms Norma MacIsaac, Adviser and Head of Planning Section

4. Ms Katherine Marshall Kissoon, RBM Officer

5. Ms Emily Rhoades, Team Administrator

Meeting with Directors and Heads:

1. Ms Joan Imhoff-Nwasike, Head, Public Sector Governance Unit (PSGU)

2. Ms Katherine Ellis, Director, Youth Division (YTH)

3. Mr Simon Gimson, Director, Political Affairs (POL)

4. Ms Katalaina Sapolu, Director, Rule of Law (ROL)

5. Mr Mikhail Charles, Assistant/Legal Officer in ROL

One-on-one follow-up meetings with:

1. Ms Evelyn Pedersen (former Results Team Leader)

2. Ms Norma MacIsaac, Adviser and Head of Planning Section

3. Ms Katherine Marshall Kissoon, RBM Officer

B. Interviews with Commonwealth staff at HQ

No.	Stakeholder type	Name and title or Division/Unit	Method & interviewer	Date/time (UK)
1	SPED (Director)	Director of SPED, Nabeel Goheer	Virtual SSI (30 min.) – Ella Haruna	Oct. 13 at 11am
2	SPED (Planning Head)	Head of Planning Team, Norma MacIsaac	Face-to-face SSI (45 min.) – Kim Kane	Sept. 28 at 9:30am
3	SPED (Planning team)	Norma MacIsaac, Head/Adviser • Amy Ingham • Bernard Tsehlo	FGD (1.5 hours) – Kim Kane	Sept. 30 at 3:30pm
4	SPED (RBM team)	• Evelyn Ogwal (former Head/Adviser) • Katherine Marshall Kissoon (RBM Officer)	FGD (1.5 hours) – Kim Kane	Sept. 30 at 2pm
5	SPED (PMIS)	PMIS programmers: • Katherine Marshall Kissoon (RBM team) • Amy Ingham (Planning team)	Observation of ONR staff training – Kim Kane	Sept. 28 at 4pm
6	Deputy Secretary-Generals (DSGs)	• Gary Dunne, DSG Corporate • Josephine Ojiambo, DSG Political • Tsung-Ping Chung, Head of Office, for DSG Economic and Social Development	FGD (1.5 hours) – Ella Haruna	Sept. 29 at 2pm

No.	Stakeholder type	Name and title or Division/Unit	Method & interviewer	Date/time (UK)
7	Directors/ Heads	Group 1: Karen McKenzie (Head, HRU) Group 2: Katherine Ellis (YTH)	FGD (1.5 hours) – Ella Haruna	Sept. 30 at 9:30am
8	Advisers/ Heads	Group 1: COM, CSD, TAU • Pauline Campbell (TA Adviser, TAU) • Que Tran (Head, IT Service Section) • Olowatoyin Job (TA Adviser, TAU) • Will Henley (Communications Officer, COMM) • Paul West (Education Adviser, HEU) • David Banks (Public Affairs Advisor to Secretary-General, OSG)	FGD (1.5 hours) – Kim Kane	Sept. 29 at 2pm – Kim Kane
9	Advisers/ Heads	Group 2: POL, ROL, PSGU • Martin Kasirye (POL) • Yvonne Apea (POL) • Anthony Ming (PSGU)	FGD (1.5 hours) – Ella Haruna	Sept. 29 at 4pm – Ella Haruna
10	Advisers/ Heads	Group 3: EPD, YTH, HRU, HEU, OSG • Diana Copper (HRU) • Mbololwa Lewanika (HEU) • Layne Robinson (YTH) • Kemi Ogusanya (Gender) • Neil Ford, Director, Communications Division	FGD (1.5 hours) – Ella Haruna	Oct. 29 at 11:30am – Ella Haruna
11	Advisers/ Heads	Group 4: TRD, EPD, ONR, DMU • Arlette Daniel (ONR) • Soobramanien Yagambaram (TRD)	FGD (1.5 hours) – Ella Haruna	Sept. 30 at 11:30am
12	Operations officers	• Rita Broni (Trade) • John Burran (POL) • Uju Maduforo (Economic Policy Division) • Nicole McIntyre (ROL) • Andrew Schofield (Youth) • Purvi Kanzaria (TAU)	FGD (1.5 hours) – Kim Kane	Sept. 30 at 11:30am
13	Finance team	• Kimberly Cliff • Kereine Combie	FGD (1.5 hours) – Kim Kane	Sept. 29 at 11:30am
14	Gender team	Kemi Ogusanya (Head of Gender Unit)	SSI (1 hour) – Ella Haruna & Kim Kane	Sept. 30 at 11am – Kim Kane & Ella Haruna

No.	Stakeholder type	Name and title or Division/Unit	Method & interviewer	Date/time (UK)
15	Gender team	Roseana Kandulu (Programme Officer)	SSI (1 hour) – Kim Kane	Sept. 29 at 4pm – Kim Kane
16	Project staff	Project Manager (NPCWG0902/ Elections): • Martin Kasirye, Head, Electoral Support Section POL • Clara Cole, Political Officer Electoral Support Section • Jonathan Milligan, Programme Officer, ESS	SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Sept. 30 at 2pm
17	Project staff	Project Manager (NRCWG0973/Human Rights): Diana Cooper, HRU	SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Sept. 28 at 9:30am
18	Project staff	Project Manager (NHCWG0925/Health): Mbololwa Mbikusita-Lewanika, HEU	SSI (45 min.) – Kim Kane	Sept. 28 at 11:30am
19	Project staff	Project Manager (NPCWG0898/Trade): Rashmi Banga, TRD	SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Sept. 28 at 11:30am
20	Project staff	Project Manager (NPCWG0927/Debt Management): Sanjay Kumar, Acting for Project Manager, Pamella McLaren, DMU	SSI (45 min.) – Kim Kane	Sept. 28 at 2pm
21	Project staff	Project team (NPCWG0915/Climate Finance): • Harsen Nyambe, Economic Adviser, Climate Finance, Economic Policy Division • Roz Price, Research Officer, Climate Finance, Economic Policy Division • Jonathan Barnes, Research Officer, Climate Finance, Economic Policy Division	SSI (45 min.) – Kim Kane	Sept. 30 at 9:30am
22	Project staff	Project Manager (NPCWG0943/Technical Assistance): • Pauline Campbell, Technical Assistance Advisor, TAU • Olowatoyin Job, Technical Assistance Advisor, TAU	SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Sept. 28 at 4pm

C. Tier 1 Country: Victoria, Mahe Island, Seychelles

#	Stakeholder type	Name & title	Contact information	Method & interviewer	Date/time (local)
'Political' work:					
1	Partner: Strengthening electoral processes and democratic institutions	Mr Hendricks Gappy, Chairperson, Electoral Commission	National Library, Victoria E:hendrick@seychelles.net, hgappy@gmail.com M: +248 2521902, +248 2515227, +248 422 5474	Face-to-face SSI (60 min.) – Ella Haruna	Oct. 31 at 2pm
'Rule of law' work:					
2	CFTC Long-term Technical Expert – Rule of Law	Justice Crawford McKee, Supreme Court Judge	T: +242 – 248 428 5858 E: cemckee@hotmail.com	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Kim Kane	Oct. 19 at 4pm
3	Other stakeholder – Rule of Law	Ms Joelle Barnes, Executive Legal Assistant to the Chief Justice	Supreme Court (Main Building), Palais de Justice, Ile due Port, Victoria T: +248 428 58 58	Face-to-face SSI (60 min.) – Ella Haruna	Nov. 2 at 10am
4	Other stakeholder – Rule of Law	Mr Divino Sabino, Chairman of the Bar Association of Seychelles	Suite 109, Premier Building, Victoria T: +248 432 10 71	Face-to-face SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Nov. 2 at 1:15pm
5	Other stakeholder – Rule of Law	Mr Rony Govinden, Attorney General	Department of Legal Affairs, National House T: +248 438 31 02	Face-to-face SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Nov. 4 at 9am
'Trade' work:					
6	Consultant – Trade	Mr Ramesh Karky, Commonwealth Expert in IP	Technical Assistance Unit Trade Assignment – Registrar General Office, Victoria T: +248 428 58 69	Face-to-face SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Nov. 2 at 2:30pm
7	Partner – Cyber Crime	Mr Hendrick Andre, Director General of Information Technology; Mr Jude Louis, Technical Officer	Department of Information Communications Technology, 3rd Floor, Caravelle House, Victoria T: +248 428 66 09	Face-to-face SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Nov. 4 at 8am
8	Partner – Intellectual Property	Ms Wendy Pierre, Registrar; Mr Fred Hoareau, Deputy Registrar General	Registrar General Office, National House, Victoria T: +248 428 09 00	Face-to-face SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Nov. 4 at 2pm

#	Stakeholder type	Name & title	Contact information	Method & interviewer	Date/time (local)
'Debt management' work:					
9	Partner – Strengthening Debt Management in the Commonwealth	Mr Brian Charlette, Director of Public Debt	Ministry of Finance Liberty House, E: bcharlette@finance.gov.sc T: +248 4382115	Face-to-face SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Nov. 4 at 11am
'Human rights' work:					
10	Partner – Establishment, operationalisation and strengthening of human rights institutions	Mr Ralph Agrippine, Former Director General for Protocol	Treaties and Consular Affairs T: +248 (428) 3535 C: +248 (272) 3522 E: ragrippine@mfa.gov.sc	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Kim Kane	Oct. 19 at 12pm
11	Other stakeholder – Establishment, operationalisation and strengthening of human rights institutions	Mr Lenny Lebon, Former MP	E: lslebon@yahoo.com T: +248 2523433	Face-to-face SSI (60 min.) – Ella Haruna	Nov. 3 at 11:30am
12	Partner – Establishment, operationalisation and strengthening of human rights institutions	Ms Dora Zatte, Ombudsman	Ombudsman – Aarti Chambers, Mont Fleuri E: ombuds@seychelles.net T: +248 4225147	Face-to-face SSI (60 min.) – Ella Haruna	Oct. 31 at 12pm
13	Partner – Establishment, operationalisation and strengthening of human rights institutions	Ms Gayethri Pillay, Second Secretary, Treaties Section	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mont Fleuri T: +248 251 8343 E: GPillay@mfa.gov.sc and gayethripillay@gmail.com	Face-to-face SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Nov. 3 at 2pm
14	Consultant – Establishment, operationalisation and strengthening of human rights institutions	Ms Mahrook Pardiwalla, Commonwealth Secretariat national consultant	T: +248 2523275	Face-to-face SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Nov. 4 at 10am
'Blue Economy' work:					
15	CFTC Long-term technical expert – ONR	Ms Dominique Benzaken, Ocean Governance Expert	T: +242 50200431 E: dobenzaken@gmail.com Skype: Dominiquebenzaken	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Kim Kane	Oct. 7 at 8:30am

#	Stakeholder type	Name & title	Contact information	Method & interviewer	Date/time (local)
16	Partner – ONR	Ms Rebecca Loustau Lalanne, Principal Secretary of the Blue Economy	Ministry of Finance, Trade and the Blue Economy, Liberty House, Victoria T: +248 438 20 95	Face-to-face SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Oct. 31 at 3pm
17	Stakeholder – ONR	Mr Phillipe Michaud, Special Advisor, Department of the Blue Economy	Ministry of Finance, Trade and the Blue Economy, Liberty House, Victoria	Face-to-face SSI (15 min.) – Ella Haruna	Oct. 31 at 4pm
All areas of work (cross-cutting):					
18	PCP	Ms Michelle Murray, Director General, International Relations Division	T : +284 428 3500 Ex 602 C: +284 283 610 E: mmurray@mfa.gov.sc	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Oct. 13 at 3pm
19	Development partner / contributor	HE Caron Rohsler, British High Commissioner	Oiaji Trade Centre, Victoria T: +248 428 36 55	Face-to-face SSI (60 min.) – Ella Haruna	Nov. 3 at 10am
20	Development partner / contributor	Mr Roland Alcindor, Programme Manager	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 1st Floor, Le Chantier Mall, Victoria T: +248 432 55 99	Face-to-face SSI (60 min.) – Ella Haruna	Nov. 4 at 1pm
21	Development partner / contributor	Mr Michael Charlette, UN co-ordination focal point for Seychelles	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mont Fleuri T: +248 428 35 86	Face-to-face SSI (60 min.) – Ella Haruna	Nov. 3 at 9am

D. Tier 1 Country: Port Vila, Efate Island, Vanuatu

#	Stakeholder type	Name & title	Contact information	Method & interviewer	Date/time (local)
'Political' work:					
1	Government official (beneficiary of support)	Mr Martine Tete, Chairman of Electoral Commission	Department of Electoral Office and Commission Electoral Commission of Vanuatu, Port Vila T: +678-23914 / 22298; M: +678 5373399 E: martinliutete@yahoo.com.au	Face-to-face SSI (1.5 hours) – Kim Kane & Evelyn Pedersen	Wed., Oct. 26 at 2pm
		Father Charles Vatu, Principle Electoral Officer	Electoral Office, Port Vila c.vatu@vanuatu.gov.vu; +678 23914/ 27534		
2	Consultant	Mr Michael Clancy, Electoral Consultant	PO Box 1097 Tewantin, Queensland, Australia 4565 M: +61 (0)421 351 513; E: mvhclancy@gmail.com	Face-to-face SSI (1.5 hours) – Kim Kane & Evelyn Pedersen	Same as above + Fri., Oct. 29 at 12:30pm
3	Consultant	Professor Donald Paterson, Emeritus Professor of Law	USP School of Law, Emalus Campus, Port Vila M: +678 564 4774; W: +678 22748 E: donald.paterson@vanuatu.usp.ac.fj	Face-to-face SSI (1.5 hours) – Kim Kane & Evelyn Pedersen	Wed., Oct. 26 at 8am
'Rule of law' work:					
4	Government official (beneficiary of support)	Hon. Vincent Lunabek, Chief Justice	Chief Justice's Chambers; Supreme Court Office PMB 9041, Port-Vila, Efate	Face-to-face SSI (1.5 hours) – Kim Kane & Evelyn Pedersen	Thurs., Oct. 27 at 2:45pm
5	CFTC Long-term technical expert – Rule of Law	Justice David Chetwynd, Supreme Court Judge	Supreme Court Office PMB 9041, Port-Vila, Efate davechet@yahoo.com or dchetwynd@vanuatu.gov.vu 1-649-344-3130; mobile 545 4216 Associate/Secretary – Ms Anita Vinabit: Office 26715 (Ext 3359)	Face-to-face SSI (1.5 hours) – Kim Kane & Evelyn Pedersen	Tues., Oct. 24 at 3:30pm (plus trial at 9am)

#	Stakeholder type	Name & title	Contact information	Method & interviewer	Date/time (local)
6	Former[1] CFTC Long-term technical expert – Rule of Law	Justice Mary Sey, Supreme Court Judge	Supreme Court Office PMB 9041, Port-Vila, Efate E: Maryyassinsey@gmail.com T: +678 5985665	Face-to-face SSI (1.5 hours) – Kim Kane & Evelyn Pedersen	Tues., Oct. 24 at 2pm
7	CFTC Long-term technical expert – Rule of Law	Master Cybelle Cenac Moragh, Master of the Court	Supreme Court Office PMB 9041, Port-Vila, Efate E: cenac25@hotmail.com T: +678 (0)7495562638 / +678-7313011	Face-to-face SSI (1.5 hours) – Kim Kane & Evelyn Pedersen	Tues., Oct. 24 at 10:30am
'Trade' work:					
8	Partner	Dr Edwini Kessie, Chief Trade Adviser at Office of the Chief Trade Adviser for Forum Island Countries (OCTA)	Air Vanuatu House, Rue de Paris, Port Vila, Vanuatu T: +678 25003; E: ekessie@octapic.org; Web: www.octapic.org	Face-to-face SSI (45 min.) – Kim Kane & Evelyn Pedersen	Fri., Oct. 28 at 5pm
'Environment' work:					
9	Government official (beneficiary of support)	Mr Brooks Rakau, Acting Commissioner of Mines	Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources E: brakau@vanuatu.gov.vu	Face-to-face SSI (45 min.) – Kim Kane & Evelyn Pedersen	Thurs., Oct. 27 at 8am
'Debt management' work:					
10	Government official (beneficiary of support)	Mr John Robert Simelum, Debt Manager, Department of Finance and Treasury	Ministry of Finance and Economic Management Treasury Division; Private Mail Bag 9031, Vanuatu E: jsimelum@vanuatu.gov.vu; T: +678 22605	Face-to-face SSI (1 hour) – Kim Kane & Evelyn Pedersen	Fri., Oct. 28 at 10am
		Ms Dorothy Ericson, Deputy Director, Department of Finance and Treasury	Ministry of Finance and Economic Management Treasury Division E: dandrew@vanuatu.gov.vu; T: +678 24543		

All areas of work (cross-cutting):

#	Stakeholder type	Name & title	Contact information	Method & interviewer	Date/time (local)
11	PCP	Mr Yvon Basil, Acting Director General	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Int'l Cooperation and External Trade E: depfa@vanuatu.gov.vu	Face-to-face SSI (1 hour) – Kim Kane & Evelyn Pedersen	Thurs., Oct. 27 at 9am
12	Development partner / contributor	HE Jeremy Bruer, Australian High Commissioner	Australian High Commission W: +678 22777 M: +678 774 3132 E: jeremy.bruer@dfat.gov.au	Face-to-face SSI (1 hour) – Kim Kane & Evelyn Pedersen	Wed., Oct. 26 at 11:30am
		Mr Simon Flores, Deputy High Commissioner	Australian High Commission W: +678 22777 E: Simon.Flores@dfat.gov.au		
		Ms Sonya Gray, First Secretary; Head, Political and Economic Unit	Australian High Commission W: +678 22777 ext 104 M: +678 774 3084 E: sonya.l.gray@dfat.gov.au		
13	Development partner / contributor	Mr Jeong Park, Deputy Head of Mission	NZ High Commission W: +678 22933 M: +678 775 6808 E: jeongmin.park@mfat.govt.nz	Face-to-face SSI (1 hour) – Kim Kane & Evelyn Pedersen	Thurs., Oct. 27 at 11am
		Ms Katherine Beckett, Development Counsellor	NZ High Commission W: +678 22933 M: +678 779 6019 E: Kathryn.beckett@mfat.govt.nz		

E. Virtual interviews with non-staff stakeholders at global and regional levels

#	Stakeholder type	Name & title	Contact information	Method & interviewer	Date/time (UK)
Global level:					
1	Development partner / contributor	Koen Rossel-Cambier Programme Manager, DEVCO Intra-ACP Private Sector and Trade	European Commission (funder of Hub & Spokes II) E: Koen.Rossel-Cambier@ec.europa.eu T: +32 22 95 88 11	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Kim Kane	Oct. 6 at 2pm
2	Commonwealth Organisation	Vijay Krishnarayan, Director	Commonwealth Foundation v.krishnarayan@commonwealth.int +44 20 7747 6571 Personal Assistant: Tamara Andrews E: t.andrews@commonwealth.int	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Oct. 26 at 1pm
3	Commonwealth Organisation	Akbar Khan, Secretary General	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Personal Assistant: Luseane Chestman; E: lochesham@cpahq.org	Virtual SSI (30 min.) – Ella Haruna	Oct. 11 at 1pm
4	Commonwealth Organisation	Kodhandaraman Balasubramanian, Vice President	Commonwealth of Learning (COL) E: kbala@col.org Skype: Kodbala	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Oct. 19 at 5pm
5	Consultant	Bernard Marshall (led the organisational reform: restructuring and its implementation)	T: +44 (0)7740633421 E: bernard.marshall@blueyonder.co.uk	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Kim Kane	Oct. 11 at 1pm
6	Consultant	Patrick Spaven (RBM Consultant)	Tel: +44 (0)1273 566096 C: +44 (0)7799418093 E: patrick@spaven.com Skype: spavenp	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Kim Kane	Oct. 11 at 10am

#	Stakeholder type	Name & title	Contact information	Method & interviewer	Date/time (UK)
7	Former staff	Steve Cutts, former Assistant to the Secretary-General (currently in the Dept of Management, UN)	Skype: stevecutts	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Nov. 8 at 12pm
8	Former staff	Amitav Banerji, Former Director, POL (currently at Global Leadership Foundation)	E: amitav.banerji@g-l-f.org Skype: amitav.banerji1	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Oct. 12 at 12pm
Regional level (Caribbean):					
9	CFTC Long-term technical expert – Climate Finance	Prof. Steven Mark Newman, Climate Finance and RBM/ Evaluation expert, currently based in Samoa and previously working for Commonwealth Secretariat in Belize	E: steve@biodiversity-int.co.uk T: 01795 533 487 Skype: Yamsho	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Kim Kane	Oct. 12 at 1:30pm

F. Virtual interviews with non-staff stakeholders in Tier 2 countries

#	Stakeholder type	Name & title	Contact information	Method & interviewer	Date/time (UK)
Grenada:					
1	Partner: Supporting Trade Competitiveness in the Commonwealth	Mr Junior Mahon, Director of Trade (accountable officer for ComSec National Export Strategy project in Grenada)	Ministry of Economic Development, Trade, Planning & Cooperatives; Grenada, WI T: 440-2101, Ext. 3008 E: mahonjunior@hotmail.com	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Oct. 19 at 2pm
Jamaica:					
2	PCP	Mrs Saskia Frater-Smith, Actin Manager, Multilateral Technical Co-operation Unit Lisa James Sinclair, Project Administrator	E: Saskia_FraterSmith@PIOJ.gov.jm T: +1-876-935-5084	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Kim Kane	Oct. 7 at 3pm
3	Partner: Supporting Trade Competitiveness in the Commonwealth	Ms Shullette Cox, Vice President, Corporate Development & Competitiveness (senior officer)	Jamaica Promotions Corporation, Jamaica WI T: +1 (876) 978-7755, 978-3337 Ext: 2147 or toll free from overseas: +1 (877) JAMVEST 526-8378 E: scox@jamprocorp.com	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Oct. 26 at 3pm
4	Partner: Establishment, operationalisation and strengthening of human rights institutions	Mrs Arlene Harrison Henry, Public Defender; and Mr Victor Hemmings, Special Projects Manager, Public Protector	E: vhemmings@opd.gov.jm T: 1 922-7089-90/7109/4159 Skype: complaints_88	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Kim Kane	Oct. 19 at 4pm
5	CFTC Long-term technical expert – Rule of Law	Mrs Petrona Sealey-Browne, Legal Drafter (TA to Office of the Parliamentary Counsel of Jamaica & previously to Grenada)	E: petrona.sealeybrowne@gmail.com T: +1-906 1717 / 906 5214	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Kim Kane	Oct. 12 at 3pm
Mozambique:					
6	Partner – National Export Strategy (NES) project	Jose Jossias, Director of Services (accountable officer for National Export Strategy project)	T: +258 823076980 (cell) or +25821307257/8 (landline)	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Oct. 26 at 10am

#	Stakeholder type	Name & title	Contact information	Method & interviewer	Date/time (UK)
Sri Lanka:					
7	Partner: Strengthening Debt Management capacity in member countries	Rohan Crishantha, Director, Debt Management, Department of External Resources	Ministry of Finance and Planning, Sri Lanka T: +94-11-2484787 C: +94-(0)718317081 E: rohan@erd.gov.lk	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Oct. 20 at 12pm
8	Partner: Strengthening Debt Management capacity in member countries	Dr Mario Gomez, Executive Director	International Centre for Ethnic Studies T: +94 11 2 679 745 E: mario@ices.lk	Virtual SSI (45 min.) – Ella Haruna	Oct. 26 at 12pm

Annex C – List of Documents Provided to Support the Evaluation

Commonwealth Secretariat contacts

1. Key contacts in Commonwealth countries

2. Lists of Directors and Heads

3. London diplomatic list

Strategic Plan

4. Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan 2008/09–2011/2012

5. Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan 2013/14–2016/17

6. Mid-Term Review Report of the Strategic Plan

7. Commonwealth Secretariat Revised Strategic Plan 2013/14–2016/17

8. Commonwealth Secretariat Revised Strategic Plan Overview

9. Commonwealth Secretariat Revised Strategic Results Framework (SRF)

Organisational structure

10. Organigram from 2011–14 (detailed and summary)

11. Organigram updated November 2015 (detailed and summary)

RBM documents

12. Secretariat's RBM Framework: Strengthening the Strategic and Project Results Measurement Framework – Dec. 2015

13. Secretariat's RBM Implementation Strategy (with 10-point Action Plan)

14. Risk Policy and Procedure – June 2014

15. Programme Management Information System (PMIS) – elements for online course (PPT)

Gender strategy

16. Gender Equality Policy

17. Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines for Project Planning (Jan. 2014)

KPMG audits

18. KPMG – Commonwealth Secretariat Project Outcomes and Delivery Report

19. KPMG – Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic and Business Planning Report

Evaluations/reviews conducted during the SP period

20. Gender Mainstreaming Training Needs Review: Full Report + Abstract + Overview and Recommendations – February 2014

21. Evaluation of Commonwealth Secretariat support to member countries on legislative drafting – January 2015

22. Impact Assessment Institution Strengthening Report in The Bahamas – April 2015

23. Geneva Trade Adviser Project Final Evaluation Report (2012-14) – July 2015

24. Staff RBM Capacity Assessment Baseline Report – September 2015

25. Commonwealth Secretariat Mid-Term Review (MTR) Report – October 2015

26. Commonwealth Connects Programme (CCP) Evaluation Final Report – November 2015

27. Evaluation of Singapore Third Country Training Programme – December 2015

28. Review and Renewal of Commonwealth Media Development Fund (CWMDF) – January 2016

29. End of Term Review of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–15 – March 2016

30. Commonwealth Secretariat Meta-Evaluation draft report (v2) – November 2016

31. Draft Summary of the Anti-Corruption Evaluation – November 2016

32. Interim Report of the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) – November 2016

UK/DFID reviews of the Secretariat's performance

33. DFID Annual Report Accounts 2012–13

34. DFID Annual Report Accounts 2013–14

35. DFID Annual Report 2014–15

36. DFID Annual Report Accounts 2015–16

37. DFID Multilateral Aid Review (MAR) – 2011

38. Commonwealth Secretariat Response to the DFID MAR – 2011

39. DFID MAR Update Assessment – 2013

40. Commonwealth Secretariat response to MAR update assessment – July 2013

41. DFID Multilateral Development Review (MDR) – 2016

SP Monitoring Reports

Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan Six-Monthly Progress Reports:

42. Six-Monthly Progress Report: Jan.–June 2013

43. Six-Monthly Progress Report: July–Dec. 2013

44. Six-Monthly Progress Report: July–Dec. 2014

45.   Six-Monthly Progress Report: Jan.–June 2015 (draft and revised versions)

46.   Six-Monthly Progress Report: July–Dec. 2015

Commonwealth Secretariat Annual Results Reports (ARRs)

47.   ARR 2012–13

48.   ARR 2013–14

49.   ARR 2014–15

50.   ARR 2015–16

Annual financial statements

51.   Audited annual financial statement: 2013–14

52.   Audited annual financial statement: 2014–15

Project documents

#NRCWG0902: Strengthening electoral processes and democratic institutions (IO# 1.3)

53.   PDD

54.   PDD Revisions (including appendix 1 & 3 only)

#NRCWG0973: Establishment, Operationalisation and Strengthening of Human Rights Institutions (IO # 2.1)

55.   PDD Revisions (including appendix 1–5)

#NRCWG0922: Strengthening National Health Frameworks and Policies in the Commonwealth (IO #3.1)

56.   PDD

57.   PDD Revisions (including appendix 1–5)

#NRCWG0898: Supporting Trade and Competitiveness in the Commonwealth (IO #5.1)

58.   PDD

59.   PDD Revisions (including appendix 1–5)

#NRCWG0927: Strengthening Debt Management Capacity in Member States (IO #5.3)

60.   PDD

61.   PDD Revisions (including appendix 1–5)

#NRCWG9015: Improving Climate Financing Frameworks (IO # 6.3)

62.   PDD

63. PDD Revisions (including appendix 1–5)

#NRCWG0921: Technical assistance, referrals and partnership mechanism respond flexible to member state needs capacity development priorities (Enabling Outcome #A2)

64. PDD

65. PDD Revisions (including appendix 1–5)

#NRCWG0943: Quality and Results in the New Strategic Plan (Enabling Outcome #B.3)

66. PDD

67. PDD Revisions (including appendix 1–5)

Lists of projects

68. List of projects, mapped to intermediate outcomes and pillars.xls

69. Annual Performance Report Final 2012–13 (which contains the list of projects pre-SP period)

Meeting minutes/notes

70. Recommendations from the Eminent Persons Group (EPG)

71. EPG Recommendations Outcomes Final

72. Secretary-General's Biennial Report, which contains Secretary-General's reports to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM)

Other resources

73. The Commonwealth Secretariat's Charter

Background for Seychelles field visit

Blue Economy work

74. Project Information Note: Seychelles Blue Economy Strategic Roadmap and Implementation (project # CWG0921) – May 2015

Back-to-Office Reports (BTOR):

75. BTOR dated 7/2014

76. BTOR dated 12/2014

77. BTOR dated 3/2015

78. BTOR dated 6/2015

79. BTOR dated 11/2015

80. BTOR dated 3/2016

LTEs' ToR and Reports:

81. ToR of National Blue Economy Assessment

82. ToR of Seychelles Blue Economy Strategic Roadmap and Implementation

83. Inception Report of LTE D Benzaken, Blue Economy Expert in Seychelles

84. Six-Monthly Report of LTE D Benzaken, Blue Economy Expert in Seychelles

85. Blue Economy Final Report – March 2014

86. SRSL Developing a Blue Economy Roadmap in The Republic of Seychelles: Contribution of New and Emerging Marine Sectors: Report prepared on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretariat for the Government of Seychelles – May 2015

87. Development of a National Blue Economy Strategy for the Republic of Seychelles: A Stocktake Analysis Prepared for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – July 2014 draft

88. Analytical desktop study on seabed mapping of Seychelles' exclusive economic zone (EEZ): An Advisory Report Prepared for the Republic of Seychelles – July 2015

Senior officials meetings

89. 'Alternative Future Visions for Seychelles Blue Economy' – Background document for Seychelles Blue Economy Roadmap Senior Officials Meeting: 3–5 August 2015, Marlborough House, London

90. Agenda of Seychelles Blue Economy Roadmap Senior Officials Meeting: 3–5 August 2015, Marlborough House, London

91. Worksheets of Seychelles Blue Economy Roadmap Senior Officials Meeting: 3–5 August 2015, Marlborough House, London

92. Outcome Report of the Meeting of Senior Officials and Commonwealth Advisers: 3–5 August 2015, Marlborough House, London

Cybercrime Initiative

Long-term experts' ToRs and reports:

93. Contract and ToR for LTE Alison Evans, Legislative Drafter and Cybercrime Legal Expert

94. Seychelles Cybercrime / Cyber Security Legislation and Policy Draft Report – May 2016

95. Cyber Security Policy

96. Cyber Security Bill

Elections work

97. Report of the Commonwealth Expert Team: Seychelles Presidential Election (19–21 May 2011)

98. Final Report to the Commonwealth Secretariat: Seychelles Electoral Reform Process – November 2012

99. Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG): Seychelles Presidential Elections (3–5 December 2015) and Re-Run of Seychelles Presidential Elections (16–18 December 2015)

100. ToR for Earl Simpson, Electoral Expert

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101. Institutional Needs Assessment: National Human Rights Commission, Seychelles

102. BTOR: Working session with the Minister of Foreign Affairs: Strengthening of the national human rights institution / Working session with the Attorney General and Seychelles Human Rights Treaty Committee: National Human Rights Action Plan (4–6 June 2014)

103. National Action Plan (NAP) on Human Rights: Master Copy – Sept. 2014

104. NAP on Human Rights: LogFrames and Action Plans

105. Internal review/comments on the NAP and associated LogFrames and Action Plans

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106. Presentation on IPR Management for MSMEs, by Professor Michael Blakeney

Research tech. Innovation work

107. National Institute for Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2014

108. Concept Note on a Workshop on Building an Integrated STI Governance System for Seychelles: 10th & 11th March 2016

109. Draft Report on Building an Integrated STI Governance System for Seychelles – by Consultant, Prof. Michael Blakeney – April 2016

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110. ToR for Strengthening the Capacity of the Judiciary of Seychelles

111. CFTC Six-Monthly Report by LTE, Justice Akiiki Kiiza in Seychelles – Oct. 2016

112. CFTC Six-Monthly Report by LTE, Justice Crawford McKee in Seychelles – Aug. 2016

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113. Work Plan for the Implementation of the Industrial Property Act, 2014 Project: Victoria, Seychelles (1 May 2016–30 April 2016)

114. ToR for a Legislative Drafting Expert

115. ToR for a Replacement Legislative Drafting Expert / WTO

116. ToR for Senior Trade Adviser

117. ToR for International Trade Specialist

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120. BTOR, Evelyn Ogwal Pederson – Vanuatu, Nov. 2016

Elections work

121. VEO Request for assistance from Commonwealth Secretariat

122. Vanuatu Hon. PM Letter to Secretary-General Commonwealth Secretariat – May 2016

123. Australian (DFAT) Grant Agreement for £500k – Election Observation

124. Vanuatu Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) report – Jan. 2016

125. CV of Vanutu electoral consultant, Michael Clancy

126. Scoping report on possible Commonwealth Secretariat assistance to the Vanuatu government to assist in the political reform process, by Michael Clancy (Vanuatu Electoral Expert) – Sept. 2016

127. Draft Budget of Civic Education/Public Awareness Campaign, phase I–V, from Michael Clancy (Vanuatu Electoral Expert) – Oct. 2016

Policy reform work

128. PPT Presentation on Vanuatu: International and comparative resources for law/ constitutional reform by Steven Malby

129. Contract and ToR with Prof. Paterson – Dec. 2015

130. Resource Document for Legal Roundtable (Background document 101115)

131. 7th Amendment to the Constitution – version 8 draft of Bill

Trade (OCTA) work

132. CFTC Mid-Term Project Review: Strengthening the Office of the Chief Trade Adviser (OCTA) to support Pacific Island Forum countries in PACER+ negotiations (Vanuatu) – July 2014

133. Job description (JD) of Economic Advisor, Trade: Strengthening OCTA to support PACER+

134. Extension to JD of Economic Adviser, Trade: Strengthening OCTA to support PACER+

135. CFTC Six-Monthly Report of Mr Adeshola Odusanya, LTE in Vanuatu – Aug. 2016

136. CFTC Six-Monthly Report of Dr Collin Zhawu, LTE in Vanuatu – Sept. 2016

137. CFTC Final Report of Dr Collin Zhawu, LTE in Vanuatu – Sept. 2016

138. BTOR of Joel Burman, TAU – June 2016

Annex D – Field Visit Summaries

Seychelles

Implementation of activities against several pillars of the Secretariat's Strategic Plan was evident in Seychelles, including: SO1–Democracy (Electoral Management); SO2–Public Institutions (Human Rights and Rule of Law/Justice work); and SO5–Development: pan-Commonwealth (Trade, Debt Management, and Oceans and Natural Resources). In terms of SO6–Development: Small States and Vulnerable States, this was emphasised by many stakeholders as a key value of the work of the Secretariat. SO4–Youth was not covered within the scope of this evaluation, and there was no recent work under SO3–Social Development reported in Seychelles.

SO1–Democracy

A nine-person Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) observed both the presidential election of December 2015 and the re-run of those elections in the same month. It was encouraging to note that observation recommendations of previous missions had been implemented – for example, the establishment of an electoral commission, the inauguration of an electoral reform commission, introduction of continuous voter registration, legislation governing campaign financing and more. Parliamentary elections were held in Seychelles in September 2016, resulting in a historic victory for the opposition for the first time since 1993 (when there was also a COG). It was reported by Seychelles Election Commission that the Secretariat observation missions are highly respected, due to their non-biased approach and guidelines and provision of a full team of experts including legal, gender, electoral specialists etc. The Secretariat election observation reports are said to be timely, providing good-quality feedback and recommendations. However, some respondents commented that the Secretariat election reports could be more direct in pushing the agenda in their reporting.

In 2011, Seychelles Election Commission had a sole commissioner, and observation missions recommended the introduction of a commission of five members. A short-term consultancy was requested to provide support to Seychelles Election

Commission in 2012 in conducting its electoral reform process. The expert advised the president on the proposal from the Constitutional Review Committee of the need to reform the constitution.

Some stakeholders report that the 'Commonwealth reputation has taken a hit in relation to elections' – this may be associated with the large election missions sent in 2016 by SADC and cross-cutting, which received bad press for 'people coming for a nice holiday'.

The Election Commission is currently engaged in reform of the voter census to clear the old register and introduce a new register. It is also looking at biometric identification and will likely request legal drafting assistance from the Secretariat.

SO2–Public Institutions

Human Rights:

The Secretariat has supported the Government of Seychelles in strengthening the National Human Rights Commission to ensure effectiveness and compliance with the Paris Principles, and in developing a credible and comprehensive National Human Rights Action Plan. During 2012–15, the Human Rights Unit (HRU) provided technical assistance for the completion of the draft action plan and a validation workshop for senior government officials. The Secretariat provided the government with a Guidance Note, which was accepted and support requested in convening a wider national consultation. In May 2015, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs convened a national stakeholder consultation to widely share the recommendations. The Commonwealth Secretariat undertook an institutional needs assessment, with a country visit in June 2015 carried out by the ombudsman of Namibia, assisted by an independent consultant. There was positive feedback on the support provided by the Secretariat; however, despite some effective inputs, the desired results have not been achieved.

The action plan development and associated stakeholder consultation involved a thorough and lengthy process and looked at all rights under the constitution. Many focus group discussions

were held in a far-reaching consultation, which revealed a lack of awareness of human rights and constitutional rights. The next step to set up a steering committee and working groups.

This was a supportive process and good learning experience, which built the capacity of those involved. The validation workshops held were powerful, bringing together all stakeholders to approve the National Action Plan (NAP) – and Secretariat support played an important role in this.

However, a weakness reported from the outset was the Human Rights Commission (HRC) being kept out of the action planning process – saying that it did not have resources and the process was not part of its mandate. UNDP (a partner in the exercise) reported that the Cabinet endorsement of the NAP for implementation was not forthcoming, and for this reason dedicated funding of £67,000 from the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Trust Fund for support to human rights institutions was lost. Although the work started in 2012, the NAP has never been approved; it is stuck with Cabinet and would now need substantial updating.

Prior to the Secretariat supported Needs Assessment in 2015, there had been doubt on how a potential HRC would fit in with the existing structure of the ombudsman. During the Needs Assessment in 2015, stakeholders agreed that a hybrid model for the HRC and the ombudsman was workable, following Namibia's example of an integrated model. One stakeholder who felt that there had been a 'fabulous consultation process' reported that the Needs Assessment report unsettled people, who started criticising the Commonwealth team because, 'They expected the end result would match the pre-conception and had a biased impartial view of what country needed'. This decision is now with the Cabinet and thinking has evolved towards splitting the function, for reasons which are likely political.

Challenges with implementation readiness on both sides were reported – at the time that the government was ready to proceed, The Secretariat was undergoing restructuring; and by the time it was ready the momentum in-country had slowed down. It was reported that following the initial request from government, it took more than one year for the Secretariat to provide support on the action plan.

Clearly the establishment of the HRC has been a difficult political process to negotiate, yet it is reported that the Secretariat managed to get dialogue going when there was stalemate, brought people to the table, and took a reasoning approach which was 'respectful, courteous, validating'. Despite the lack of a satisfactory conclusion, the Secretariat were reportedly pragmatic, reliable and consistent, and did its utmost to achieve a broader partnership.

Rule of Law:

Under the Institutional Strengthening of the Judiciary project, Seychelles has seen the placement of two Supreme Court Judges and one Court Administration Adviser. As a result of this the backlog of cases has been significantly reduced, in excess of 70 per cent in the Criminal Division and 25 per cent in the Civil Division. The computerisation and introduction of the Computerised Case Administration System Seychelles (CCASS) system in the Supreme Court has improved the processing and management of court cases. The advantages of the system include the location of files, input of quality data, significant improvement in cause lists, assignments of cases, speed in the retrieval of reports, and access to court decisions. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of this for transparency and tracking of cases – prior to the CCASS the courts were said to be providing 'a very expensive, slow form of justice.' The Secretariat expert supported in the standardisation of court proceeding and worked to professionalise the court, such that all judgements take the same shape. The CCASS allows the public to access judgements and also facilitates legal research.

At the time of placement, Seychelles had six judges, so the addition of two Commonwealth judges was a substantial boost to capacity. Stakeholders reported that the judiciary has gained the trust of Seychelles public, and that there have been positive changes in the performance of the Supreme Court since the inception of the project. Stakeholders commented positively on the Commonwealth judges as being the most independent of the judiciary and highly respected. There are however still significant capacity challenges especially in the Magistrates Court (with only 3 magistrates), and The Secretariat has been urged to consider a request for two additional magistrates. Further

assistance is still needed to build the capacity and encourage staff to shift to CCASS away from the manual process.

Stakeholders reported that the Secretariat hosted two workshops to support the shift of mentality away from adjournment, and this was very successful. It particular it prevented judges from double booking and the rate of adjournment reduced tremendously after double booking practice was regulated.

The two Commonwealth judges have contributed to bringing about change in sentencing practice, namely the use of concurrent (as opposed to consecutive), sentences and the development of a sentencing tariff. Concerns raised by the Judges on Seychelles current Sentencing Policy are being formally addressed. The Acting Chief Justice has established a 'Sentencing Advisory Committee' to review and advise on appropriate sentencing and eventual Practice Directions.

The two Judges were selected for their independence to sit as members of the constitutional court to hear an election petition brought by Seychelles National Party challenging the victory in the December 2015 presidential election of James Michel, won by a majority of 193 votes. This was a massively significant case, with lots of public intrigue. The Chief Justice presided, and specifically chose the two foreign judges to sit with her, as backlash was high. Five rulings were handed down, including one which was instrumental for Seychelles constitutional law and critical of the Electoral Commissioner. As a result of the case recommendations were made for legal guidelines for elections regulations – and this legislation was implemented within months – strengthening the separation of powers. The Court upheld the election of the president and this case was historically very important as it showed courts willing to make uncomfortable decisions, a tremendous legacy from the jurisprudence point of view.

One of the factors contributing to the backlog of criminal cases was the mandatory high sentencing under the former Misuse of Drugs act. The Commonwealth judges were instrumental in the process of review of this Act as one had worked with similar programme in Hong Kong and advised the committee setting up the tribunal. In addition, the Secretariat sentencing guidelines have been valuable as a source of best practice.

With the judges playing a capacity gap filling role, one concern is that of sustainability, and the effectiveness of capacity transfer. In the absence of any training and mentoring plan, the judges have not conducted formal training or mentoring of junior judges. Informal capacity transfer takes place through the monthly judges meeting, but capacity is developed mainly through jurisprudence i.e. the judgements the Commonwealth judges hand down bring in an international feel, and more nuanced approach. The Secretariat has been very helpful in helping Seychelles recruit internationally, for example an East African Magistrate has recently been recruited through Commonwealth networks. However, support from the Secretariat on judicial training would be very helpful indeed to offer capacity strengthening for the existing judges in areas such as legal research, judgement writing and ethics.

SO5–Development: Pan-Commonwealth

Trade:

The Secretariat provided a senior trade policy adviser in preparation for Seychelles' accession to the WTO, who was responsible for preparation of the WTO Accession Road Map; assistance in negotiations for accession to the WTO and other trade negotiations; identification of and advice on the necessary adaptation of the existing domestic trade policy regime; advise on a negotiation strategy for multilateral, bilateral and regional trade negotiations; and mentoring of the Trade Section staff of the Ministry of Finance. He was supported by two short-term legislative drafters, who drafted specific legislations required for the WTO accession. This expert had six major enactments to deliver in a six-month period and his assistance was tremendous. It was very challenging for Seychelles to accede to the WTO and this assistance was instrumental. The feedback for both experts from the attorney general was highly positive; however, the evaluator was not able to meet with representatives from the Trade Division.

The presence of a full-time technical adviser supported Seychelles in 'leapfrogging' other countries in the accession queue. It takes most applicant nations on average five years to achieve accession to the WTO, and it took Seychelles only two years. The project strove to assist Seychelles to gain credit for reforms already undertaken and limit additional reform to those essential for

WTO compliance, and the government 'shifted its speed into overdrive' according to the Accession Newsletter of the WTO. The Secretariat project was one of the main factors responsible for the rapid progress of Seychelles accession to the WTO, which had been stuck since 1997.

In 2014, Seychelles identified an area of need in the Office of Intellectual Property, a small Unit with just three staff. In response to this demand, the Secretariat placed a short-term expert for a one-year placement in the office, whose primary responsibility was to assist in the implementation of the new law, by interpretation and practical application of the new law. The long-term expert has been successfully training staff to raise awareness in relation to the new laws; however, on the legal side, it was felt that greater specialism may be required to interpret the law.

Debt Management:

Seychelles has used the Commonwealth Secretariat Debt Recording and Management System (CS-DRMS) since 2004 as its main recording system for external debt. The debt forecasting capacity (debt service payments and stock of debt outstanding) is accurate and reliable, and the country uses it for all projections and to generate reports to the president, Central Bank, IMF, the World Bank and other stakeholders. The Debt Unit has four staff, all of whom have received training with the Secretariat; one is currently undertaking an online debt management course and all have attended a seminar or conference. Secretariat officials have visited Seychelles on three occasions to provide specific training on the CS-DRMS software and debt sustainability analysis; the training was described as 'fantastic tailored training'. The Director of Public Debt, Ministry of Finance, Seychelles has been to London to attend a conference on debt restructuring and made presentations at other Secretariat events, which are excellent for exchanging experiences with other countries. Although the IMF and World Bank have also assisted Seychelles in debt management – for instance, joint missions for the development of a debt management strategy (MTDS) and the World Bank's Debt Management Performance Assessment (DeMPA) were carried out in 2012 and 2013 – the Unit reported it had no other current partners to build capacity in debt management.

Ocean Governance & Natural Resource Management:

Seychelles resource area is more than 99 per cent marine, so it is essential that the country develop the capacity to properly manage the sustainable development of its marine resources. During Rio+20, Seychelles was among coastal and island developing countries which emphasised the role of oceans and championed the promotion of the concept of the 'Blue Economy' on the international sustainable development agenda. While there is no universally accepted definition for the Blue Economy, for Seychelles the notion of the Blue Economy refers to the economic activities that directly or indirectly take place in marine and coastal areas, use outputs from the ocean, and that put goods and services into ocean activities.

The Commonwealth Secretariat has been the primary partner in the development of the Blue Economy Roadmap since the start of the project, and the Commonwealth is one of the few development partners who have clearly identified the oceans as a core development opportunity for member countries and is focused on practical measures to implement the 'Blue Economy' in SIDS.

In 2012, the Government of Seychelles identified a need for technical assistance to elaborate the Blue Economy for national and international positioning. The key outputs of the project included: a 'stocktake' document setting out the status quo in Seychelles relating to marine management; a national consultation process that engaged broadly with the full range of stakeholders; a 'road map' document setting out development options based on both the stocktake and knowledge of new and emerging marine sectors that could be developed in Seychelles; and a National Blue Economy Strategy. In addition, the Oceans and Natural Resources Advisory Division (ONR) of the Commonwealth Secretariat facilitated a two-day meeting of senior officials and external experts in London to clarify future vision for the Blue Economy in Seychelles. This event was tremendously helpful in developing ownership and awareness among senior government figures.

To support progression of the roadmap, ONR established an ad hoc advisory panel of experts from the Scottish Association of Marine Sciences (SAMS), with expertise in key aspects of the Blue Economy, to provide technical advice to the government on the development of a national strategy. ONR has also brokered meetings

of officials from Seychelles with Norwegian government agencies and biotechnology company (Alkymar) to explore projects of mutual interest.

Since the start of the project, significant institutional changes have occurred with respect to the Blue Economy in Seychelles – the main change being the establishment of a dedicated Blue Economy Department in the newly organised Ministry of Finance, Trade and Blue Economy. The establishment of this department is an important step for Seychelles, since it has now established a central agency with overall responsibility for co-ordinating implementation of the Blue Economy in the country, something that previously had been lacking. Seychelles applied for a CFTC-funded technical adviser to assist it with implementation of the Blue Economy Roadmap, and technical support has been provided by the LTE – whose key deliverable is to turn the concept note into fully fledged roadmap; the expert is an invaluable member of the three-person Blue Economy Unit. Strong technical support is also provided by ONR, which maintains a keen interest, offering practical insights via quarterly teleconferences; these are regarded as 'backstopping which is really needed'. However, Seychellois respondents found it unfortunate that there were not more opportunities to cross paths with Secretariat staff at key events, rather than needing to set up separate meetings. 'The Secretariat should be more actively seen and participating, they are not always present at key Blue Economy forums'.

To develop the Blue Economy, Seychelles needed to develop boundaries. To this end, the Secretariat has assisted Seychelles with its submission to the UN for joint management with Mauritius of the extended continental shelf in the Mascarene Plateau Region; in this respect, technical support was received in the task to delimit the extended continental shelf. Frameworks are now in place for operation, fisheries and other sectors and this is the only example of joint maritime management in the world. Stakeholders report that the Secretariat was instrumental in assisting Seychelles to defend the boundary delineation at the UN, providing two short-term consultants to prepare data and help with the development of a management plan.

Next steps will include facilitation of a ministerial working session to brief Cabinet on the roadmap; work to continue to complete the draft roadmap for adoption by Cabinet; and development of an accompanying policy framework. The Secretariat has also committed to field two additional CFTC-funded short-term experts, and the government is considering the most pressing needs to be addressed. It is likely to call for technical assistance for a tuna fisheries assessment, to review legal treaties with the EU which are impacted by ongoing policy amendments; and support to develop a national research strategy for marine science. The challenge is for Seychelles to move beyond ocean governance as involving tourism and fisheries only, which it has been doing for 200 years, and towards a Blue Economy national strategy that sees the ocean as a development space.

SO6–Development: Small States and Vulnerable States

In general, respondents valued the support of the Secretariat to this small island state, particularly as all other development partners have withdrawn since Seychelles became a high-income country.

Cross-cutting: Collaboration and Partnerships

The partnership with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) on human rights work was highly valued. UNDP was also recently been approached by a member of the Gender Section to collaborate on SDG 5. UNDP are keen for more opportunities to collaborate with the Secretariat.

Cohesiveness of programming

It was noteworthy that the Secretariat interventions in Seychelles were highly segregated, with no linking between sectors. It was common for stakeholders in a certain SO area to be unaware of work carried out under another SO. The long-term experts posted to this small island were not connected to each other by the Secretariat. Many stakeholders called for better publicity and communication from the Secretariat on the work it was carrying out.

Vanuatu

All pillars of Secretariat work were evident in Vanuatu, with close linkages connecting several of the different areas of the SP's Intermediate Outcomes, most notably the work done in rule of law, elections and political reform. The reviewed programmes pertain to the following pillars: SO1–Democracy (Political Reform, Electoral Management); SO2–Public Institutions (support to

the Supreme Court for Rule of Law/Justice work); and SO5–Development: Pan-Commonwealth (Trade, Debt Management, and Oceans and Natural Resources). In terms of SO6–Development: Small States and Vulnerable States, the Vanuatu government has expressed interest in Climate Financing support; however, evaluators were not able to interview the representative to further explore this area. Vanuatu has also expressed a desire to host CHOGM.

SO1–Democracy

The political reform process was at its peak in Vanuatu, with the parliament being dissolved and snap elections taking place in January 2016, a subsequent drafting of an amendment to the constitution, and ongoing preparations for the country's first-ever referendum due to take place in early 2017. The Secretariat has provided real-time and meaningful input into the political reform process since 2010. Most recently, it has provided two short-term experts to support the different stages: (1) a Vanuatu-based legal expert supporting the Vanuatu State Law Office to prepare the constitutional amendments, including participating in negotiations as a key member of the Government Task Force; and (2) an electoral consultant working in the Office of the Prime Minister and closely collaborating with the Electoral Office. The Secretariat's contributions have been critical to achieving the following milestones: (a) the independent observation of elections; (b) negotiations and legislative drafting of the constitutional reform; and (c) the design and (upcoming) implementation of an awareness campaign for the referendum.35

These successes, of course, have not come without challenges, such as the following:

- The political reform process will continue beyond the referendum envisaged in March 2017. Although UNDP has already communicated its three-year commitment to the process, the Secretariat, which is considered the primary and preferred stakeholder in the process, has not been able to commit beyond the referendum. The short-term nature of this commitment risks negatively affecting longer-term plans and anticipated results, including the nature of partnerships/collaboration with existing partners.

- Electoral management capacity is low compared with needs. With political reforms under way, there will be greater demands on the Electoral Office with its limited staff. This capacity gap has been identified as one of the key challenges in the implementation of the recommendations of the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG). Requests for long-term experts have been expressed to the Secretariat.

It was noted that collaboration could be established with the New Zealand High Commission for long-term capacity development in the political reform process, yet prerequisites would be the development of a clear country strategy by the Secretariat and specific requests from the government.

SO2–Public Institutions

The Secretariat has played an important role in strengthening the judiciary and facilitating the administration and delivery of rule of law and justice. In Vanuatu, the independence of the judiciary is strong, yet there is a human resource gap for competent local lawyers and judges. The recruitment and support of two positions within the Supreme Court – a judge and a master of court (a new position in Vanuatu) – has helped to fill that gap, as has the secondment of another judge by the New Zealand High Commission. As a result, there is evidence of improved functioning of the Supreme Court in terms of a reduction in backlogged cases, the introduction of mediation to increase the rate of closure of cases, and improved standards for rule of law and justice. Notable achievements include the 2015 sentencing of 15 Members of Parliament (MPs) due to corruption, by the Supreme Court judge – whose position was funded by the Secretariat for years and was subsequently hired directly by the Vanuatu government. This ruling was enthusiastically supported by the general population and respondents of the evaluation unanimously believed that it would help to curb corruption going forward.

The interviews revealed that the main challenge in this area related to the weak skills and professional ethics of the Bar, which is inhibiting the quality and efficiency of trial processes. Currently only three (3) out of the seven (7) Supreme Court judges are local, with two being international experts funded by the Secretariat and NZ and two being regional

funded by the Vanuatu government. This capacity gap has even posed significant challenges to filling the positions that the Secretariat has agreed to fund within the Supreme Court. For instance, there have been three failed attempts to date in the recruitment of a deputy to the master of court, due to lack of qualified persons in the country. With this in mind, both the chief justice and the NZ High Commission have expressed that long-term capacity development for judges must be addressed for the sustainability of the programme. A joint approach to capacity development is being called upon by the key stakeholders, revealing an opportunity for future collaboration between the Secretariat and the NZ High Commission, and possibly others.

SO5–Development: Pan-Commonwealth

Trade:

The Secretariat has placed several trade experts in the Office of Chief Trade Adviser (OCTA), which is based in Vanuatu and charged with co-ordinating negotiations on the regional trade agreement, the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER)-Plus. These CFTC experts have been very much commended for their role, which involved developing regional capacity of trade advisers from Pacific Island countries (thanks to funding from the European Union to the Commonwealth Secretariat).

OCTA had a regional mandate and the placement of its office in Vanuatu brought added benefit in terms of local capacity development, since additional places within trainings/workshops were offered to members of the host country.

The seven-year negotiation process was in its final stages at the time of writing, with the Trade Ministers Meeting taking place in Fiji during the evaluator's field mission. It is envisaged that the negotiations will conclude between December 2016 and March 2017, thereby dissolving the OCTA and initiating implementation of the agreement. Vanuatu and Fiji have expressed interest in hosting the next phase.

Debt Management:

A decade ago, Vanuatu's loan portfolio was small; however, in the last five or six years – with significant lending from China and loans for recovery from Cyclone Pam – it has skyrocketed. In response, a

Debt Management Unit (DMU) was established within the Ministry of Finance, and the need for robust debt management software was identified.

The DMU commends the Secretariat's debt management software, CS-DRMS, for its multiplicity of functions, especially the ease in reporting and conducting the Debt Sustainability Analysis required by the World Bank and IMF. 'I've never seen a software like this. It does more than just reporting. Whatever charts you want, it can do it', said a member of the DMU during the interview. With the increasing amount of debt maturing, the data that this software can generate is valuable to provide parliament and key decision-makers with evidence on the impact of current levels of debt to the national economy, as well as promoting a reduction in the number of new loans in the pipeline, the negotiation of lower interest rates and the securing of more grants.

Despite the potential to make debt management more effective and efficient, the team has not yet started using the latest version of the CS-DRMS software and instead is making do with Excel. This is mainly due to the technical glitches the team has encountered since installing the updated version of the software. Currency conversions and other reconciliations must be done manually, and no new data can be entered until error messages are resolved; therefore, there is now a large backlog of entries. Given that only one person handles the system, there has been insufficient time to address recurrent reconciliation errors in addition to carrying out standard data entry. This problem was compounded by Cyclone Pam, which caused significant destruction on the island and a temporary government shut-down.

The issue has been discussed with the Secretariat's support team and actions are being taken to resolve it. In particular, the regional training offered by the Secretariat in 2015 in Fiji was considered very useful in helping to address the challenges. Regardless, the risk of this problem reoccurring is still high, as any absence of the assigned DMU staff member means no debt recording or analysis occurs in the CS-DRMS software and debt management responsibilities fall to the accounting staff.

Ocean Governance & Natural Resource Management:

By providing technical assistance to the Foreign Affairs Office, the Secretariat facilitated the development of a National Oceans Policy.

This policy, which was passed by the Council of Ministers just three or four weeks before the evaluation visit to Vanuatu, is considered pivotal for ocean governance. Its development was a joint effort, whereby the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) assisted with the drafting and the Secretariat supported the review. The Secretariat's fast response in deployment of expertise and the quality of support was appreciated by local stakeholders.

In addition, the Secretariat has accepted a request from the Ministry of Land and Natural Resources for assistance in the review of the *Mines and Minerals Act* and the *Petroleum Law*. This began with a scoping mission and a needs assessment, for which one recommendation was to train staff. Therefore, in August 2016, ONR conducted an interdisciplinary workshop on petroleum exploration for staff from multiple ministries. According to one participant, the workshop was well received by all and was an 'eye-opener' to the complex issues in petroleum that they were not previously aware of. 'It was really good for Vanuatu, because we don't have any extraction capacities, but we think there's some potential', said the respondent. 'It was good to have this preparatory phase. The ministry has to be prepared before companies come in'. The level of knowledge, articulation of the issues and the ongoing virtual support provided by the Secretariat's expert teams are also particularly respected.

A discussion paper on the overarching policy for petrol has been developed as a follow-up to the workshop, and it is currently under review within the ministry. It is expected to inform the next stage of engagement, which the ministry hopes will include assistance on the quarry work.

SO6–Development: Small States and Vulnerable States

Climate Financing:

The Ministry of Climate Change, Meteorology Geo-Hazard and the Environment has made an official request for a national adviser from the Secretariat's Climate Finance Access Hub; however, the Secretariat is awaiting the ministry to nominate a focal point to take the work forward.

Development partners expressed that the Pacific wants to get on board with climate change initiatives, and climate financing in particular. Yet they noted that it is a hot new topic and an already crowded field, so it is important that development partners seriously consider how to avoid duplicating efforts. There is a concern that the amount of financial assistance the country receives in this area may end up being more than it can realistically spend.

Cross-cutting: Collaboration and Partnerships

The Secretariat has received funding from both the Australian and New Zealand governments at the global level; yet neither of the Vanuatu-based High Commissions was aware of the details of such funds or the rationale for reductions/withdrawal of funding in recent years. They were also not familiar with the current Strategic Plan, nor the process used to develop/review it.

Currently, New Zealand is conducting a mapping exercise of development partners in different sectors as part of its national strategic planning process. Much as it is clear what areas of comparative advantage the Secretariat has, particularly in the political and judicial sector, there has been no clear understanding of the Secretariat's other areas of work. The lack of local presence, communication on its strategic priorities, and ability to consistently co-ordinate with development partners in-country were all identified as obstacles to strengthening partnerships and maximising impact. The development and sharing of a clearly articulated strategy is necessary to form the basis for collaboration or partnership at the country level.

The Australian High Commission echoed New Zealand's views that the Secretariat's engagement is particularly valuable in 'politically high-risk' domains that are too sensitive for them to engage in bilaterally. As a body that is seen to be an impartial, trusted broker, they feel the Secretariat is best placed to focus on governance, constitutional reform, political stability and elections. Those are the areas in which other development partners and donors are less engaged in Vanuatu. Rather, their priorities are mainly in health, education, infrastructure, economic strengthening and tourism.

Annex E – Analysis of Internal Alignment

Table E1 Eminent Persons Group recommendations approved to be taken forward in the context of the current Strategic Plan[36]

No.	Accepted recommendation of the EPG	Inclusion in the SP?
21	The SG should reform the Secretariat's structures and systems in order to deliver this enhanced vision of the Commonwealth's contribution to development, as well as relevantly strengthening its role as a central knowledge and co-ordination hub (a 'Network of Networks'). The SG should report to the Executive Committee of the Board of Governors on a regular basis on progress in achieving this reform.	Organisational restructuring took place at the start of the new SP (see Section 3.4.1 for details.)
27	The SG should establish High-Level Advocacy Missions to engage in dialogue with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank to make progress on specified issues, such as a review of the criteria used by international financial institutions to determine the economic wellbeing and entitlements of a country. Such criteria should take account, additionally, of factors such as a country's level of indebtedness; its fiscal capacity to finance development programmes; and the higher costs it pays for trade because of its remoteness.	Global advocacy, international declarations, resolutions and the commitments are reflected in Enabling Outcome I and in 5.2 regarding global development and financing.
28	The Secretariat's Office in Geneva for small states should be staffed by technically experienced and entrepreneurial officers with knowledge of the WTO and its negotiating bodies, to provide technical assistance to small states in: (a) negotiating their positions within the negotiating bodies of the WTO; (b) all aspects of trade facilitation; and (c) safeguarding their special interests in the development of the proposed Anti- Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) which may involve serious dangers for many Commonwealth countries.	This figures in the strategies proposed for contributing to SO6– Development: Small States and Vulnerable States. Trade adviser in place. HR adviser post currently vacant.
32	The SG should establish a mechanism so that progress on the debt issue, including responses from international financial institutions, could be tracked and considered by annual meetings of Ministers of Finance and CHOGMs.	Support to establish and strengthen debt management systems is the focus of IO 5.3.
35	The SG should include in the Secretariat's spending plans, for approval by the Board of Governors, the strengthening of its support to member countries in their debt management through advocacy, policy advice and technical assistance.	
58	The SG should be authorised to work with UN bodies, such as UNAIDS, WHO and UNDP, to develop joint programmes with private sector organisations, including the pharmaceutical industry and philanthropic organisations inside and outside the Commonwealth that could have an impact on preventing and treating HIV/AIDS.	This would presumably be part of IO 3.1, though it is not explicitly mentioned in the SP.

No.	Accepted recommendation of the EPG	Inclusion in the SP?
59	The SG should be authorised to mount a high-level mission to relevant UN bodies to advocate a review of any criteria that may unfairly disqualify vulnerable developing countries in the Commonwealth from gaining access to the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS based on their per capita income.	This is not explicitly referenced in the SP, though would presumably be part of IO 3.1 and Enabling Outcome I on Global Advocacy.
63	The SG should be mandated to prepare, by 31 March 2012, a draft plan on which the Secretariat's work and its future development would be focused. The plan should be submitted to the Board of Governors of the Secretariat by May 2012 for its assessment and recommendations, with the aim that the SG should implement it from 1 January 2013. The next Secretariat Strategic Plan, currently under consideration, is to be completed by 30 June 2012. This plan should be merged into the process outlined above so that the Secretariat Strategic Plan for the ensuing four years is only finalised after the recommendations of the intergovernmental discussions can be fully taken into account.	This recommendation refers to the 2013/14–2016/17 Strategic Plan, which is the subject of this current evaluation.

Table E2 Mapping of the SP to the Commonwealth Charter

Chapters of the Commonwealth Charter:	Strategic Outcomes of the Secretariat's SP:
Democracy	Democracy–SO1: Greater adherence to Commonwealth political values and principles
Human Rights	Public Institutions–SO2: More effective, efficient and equitable public governance (IO 2.1: Human Rights)
International Peace and Security	--
Tolerance, Respect and Understanding	Democracy–SO1: Greater adherence to Commonwealth political values and principles (IO 1.4: Values of 'Respect and Understanding')
Freedom of Expression	--
Separation of Powers	Public Institutions–SO2: More effective, efficient and equitable public governance (IO 2.3: Independence of the Judiciary)
Rule of Law	Public Institutions–SO2: More effective, efficient and equitable public governance (IO 2.4: Rule of Law and Justice)
Good Governance	Public Institutions–SO2: More effective, efficient and equitable public governance
Sustainable Development	Development: Pan-Commonwealth–SO5: More inclusive economic growth and sustainable development
Protecting the Environment	Development: Pan-Commonwealth–SO5: More inclusive economic growth and sustainable development (IO 5.4: Effective, equitable, transparent and sustainable management of marine and other natural resources)
Access to Health, Education, Food and Shelter	Social Development–SO3: Enhanced positive impact of social development (IO 3.1: National frameworks and policies for health outcomes; IO 3.2: National frameworks and policies for education outcomes)
Gender Equality	Social Development–SO3: Enhanced positive impact of social development (IO 3.3: Mainstreaming of gender equality and the empowerment of women)

Chapters of the Commonwealth Charter:	Strategic Outcomes of the Secretariat's SP:
Importance of Young People	Youth–SO4: Youth more integrated and valued in political and development processes
Recognition of the Needs of Small States	Development: Small States and Vulnerable States–SO6: Strengthened resilience of small states and vulnerable states
Recognition of the Needs of Vulnerable States	Development: Small States and Vulnerable States–SO6: Strengthened resilience of small states and vulnerable states
The Role of Civil Society	--

Annex F

Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan 2013/14-16/17

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

The Commonwealth of Nations came into being in 1949. The Commonwealth Secretariat is an intergovernmental organisation, established in 1965. It has 53 member countries across the globe, bringing together 2.2 billion people. The Organisation promotes democracy, rule of law, human rights, good governance, social and economic development and is also a voice for small states and youth empowerment. The Secretariat work is guided by its Charter and Strategic Plan as stated in the Charter as "*Affirming our core Commonwealth principles of consensus and common action, mutual respect, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, legitimacy, and responsiveness*".

The Strategic Plan for the period 2013/14 to 2016/17 was developed after extensive consultation with member governments. It is more narrowly focussed than previous plans, as directed by Commonwealth Heads of Government. It maintains a balance of outcomes and allocation of effort between the longstanding 'democracy' and 'development' work of the Secretariat's work. The Plan takes into account agreed recommendations of the 2011 report of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG). It also includes the orientation to a strategy to collaborate with Commonwealth organisations.

The Plan reflects the shared priorities of member governments. These include three overarching goals. These are:

- Strong democracy, rule of law, promotion and protection of human rights and respect for diversity;
- Inclusive growth and sustainable development; and
- A well-connected and networked Commonwealth.

The Plan includes six strategic outcomes to be pursued over eight to ten years. Each strategic outcome has a set of intermediate outcomes to be delivered in the four years of the Strategic Plan period. The Plan is based on a Strategic Results Framework (SRF) which provides intermediate outcomes and indicators to support these six strategic outcomes:

1. *Democracy* – greater adherence to Commonwealth political values and principles;
2. *Public institutions* – more effective, efficient and equitable public governance;
3. *Social Development* – enhanced positive impact of social development;
4. *Youth* – youth more integrated and valued in political and development processes;
5. *Development*: *pan-Commonwealth* – more inclusive economic growth and social and sustainable development; and
6. *Development*: *small states and vulnerable states* – strengthened resilience of small states and vulnerable states.

In addition to the strategic and intermediate outcomes, the SRF also has four enabling outcomes and three internal result areas. The enabling outcomes are those results that

underpin the intermediate outcomes. The internal outcomes, on the other hand, will ensure an efficiently run organisation that promotes the delivery of the enabling and intermediate results.

Indicators are provided against which the impact of the Secretariat's work can be measured. A Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (ME&R) Framework complements the SRF to help the Secretariat monitor and evaluate results, as well as report on progress in achieving the agreed outcomes.

An internal mid-term review (MTR) was conducted at the mid-way point of the Plan in the summer of 2015, which was informed by two KPMG audits on the Secretariat's Strategic and Business Planning Process and Project Outcomes/Delivery. This included reviews of performance reports; records of Executive Committee of the Board, and the Board of Governors meetings; external review reports, such as DFID Multilateral Aid Reviews; and extensive consultations with programme Divisions. The MTR resulted in a more robust SRF with indicators revised to ensure they were specific, measureable, achievable, realistic, and time bound. In addition, baselines and targets were determined and results areas reduced from 31 to 29.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF ASSIGNMENT

The Strategic Planning and Evaluation Division (SPED) is commissioning an independent evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariats' Strategic Plan 2013/14-2016/17. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the prioritization, relevance to the Commonwealth's needs, effectiveness and impact of the Secretariat's projects and programmes.

Covering the three years of Strategic Plan (2013/14-2015/16) implementation, the evaluation will provide an independent opinion on the design of the Plan, implementation approach and results of the Strategic Plan. It will also make recommendations from both the strategic and operational perspectives that will directly input into the Strategic Plan 2017/18 - 2021/22. Specifically, the evaluation will:

- Evaluate the extent to which the Secretariat's projects and initiatives were relevant to the agreed priorities of member countries, and consistent with intermediate outcomes of the Strategic Plan;
- Assess the extent to which Commonwealth member states may have benefited from the Secretariat's work and tangible outcomes realised;
- Assess the results based management approach and system used in the design and delivery of the Strategic Plan;
- Assess the operational planning aspects in the delivery of the Strategic Plan and suggest improvements, if necessary;
- Assess the process and outcome of the organisational reform and restructuring in the delivery of the Strategic Plan; and make a judgement if the structure followed the strategy;
- Assess the extent of gender mainstreaming enabled and realised through the strategic plan;
- Assess the level of alignment of the Strategic Plan to global development agenda and make recommendations for alignment to the Sustainable Development Goals;

- Identify issues, challenges and lessons learned and make recommendations for the development of the next Strategic Plan (2017/18 – 2021/22).

3. METHODOLOGY

The Consultant will include the following key steps in the conduct of the evaluation for information collection, analysis and report writing during the study.

- Review of all pertinent records and data related to the Strategic Plan design and implementation, monitoring and reporting, including Six Monthly Progress reports, Annual Results Reports, Mid-Term Review Report, Secretary-General's reports to CHOGM;
- Review member country reviews of the Secretariat's performance during the period, such as DFID's annual report and multilateral aid review;
- Review relevant Executive Committee of the Board and Board of Governors records;
- Review KPMG audits of the Secretariat's Strategic and Business Planning Process and Project Outcomes/Delivery;
- Review evaluation reports conducted within the Strategic Plan period;
- Conduct focussed evaluative reflection sessions with project and programme teams in the Commonwealth Secretariat engaged in the delivery of the Strategic Plan;
- Conduct field visits to verify progress achieved and reported, if necessary;
- Interview selected stakeholders- High Commissioners, governments, programme partners, collaborating institutions, and consultants- through field visits and electronically/ telephonically;
- Review the Secretariat's results based management approach and system used in the delivery of the Strategic Plan;
- Undertake any additional activities, as may be agreed with SPED, in order to enable the proper execution of the evaluation.

4. DELIVERABLES

The Evaluation will provide the following deliverables to the Secretariat:

- Inception report with the Evaluation framework, work plan, methodology and draft templates for all necessary evaluation tools;
- An early summary report with indication of findings and recommendations to inform the strategic planning process;
- Draft Evaluation report;
- A dissemination seminar/ presentation on the Evaluation findings and recommendations;
- Primary and secondary data sets used in the production of the report, especially if surveys and external data are part of the methodology;
- Final Evaluation report, incorporating all feedback/ comments received on the draft report and during the dissemination seminar.

The deliverables must be submitted to SPED electronically as a Microsoft Word document. The inception report is due within two weeks after the initial meetings with the Secretariat

staff and the review of literature. The draft evaluation report is to be submitted within two weeks of completion of the field visits. Following the presentation of the Evaluation findings at a seminar at the Secretariat and receipt of feedback comments from the Secretariat and other stakeholders on the draft report, the consultant(s) is/are expected to submit a revised final Evaluation report. The draft (and final) Evaluation reports must be no more than 75 pages, excluding all annexes. The copyright of the Evaluation Report shall belong to the Commonwealth Secretariat.

5. SCHEDULE AND LEVEL OF EFFORT

The study is planned to commence in late spring 2016. It is estimated that 60 consultant days will be needed to complete the study, including agreed fieldwork. Travel and DSA expenses related to country field visits for validation of findings will be covered separately as per Secretariat's Travel Policy for external consultants. The consultant(s) will work in close collaboration with SPED.

6. LOCATION

The consultant(s) will need to travel to:

- The Commonwealth Secretariat office in London, UK for initial meetings and interviews with Secretariat staff and for presentation and discussion of the draft reports and recommendations.
- Country field visits, as agreed with the Secretariat, for documentation of country case studies and validation of findings

Any other relevant work is to be undertaken at the consultant(s)' normal place of work and there is no provision for any other travel.

7. CONSULTANCY REQUIREMENTS

The consultant(s)/ consultancy team should demonstrate the following:

- Substantive knowledge and experience in undertaking reviews, evaluations and critical research, with a minimum of 10 years' experience;
- Knowledge and experience of strategic plan design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- In-depth knowledge of RBM approaches in the context of international organizations and particularly in the work streams of multi-lateral organisations
- Ability to handle and analyse big datasets, and conduct multi country reviews;
- Excellent communication skills, both spoken and written English, including experience in the production of clear and concise reports for international/inter-governmental institutions, and delivery of messages to a diversified audience;
- Good understanding of the work of multilateral organisations, especially the Commonwealth; and
- Familiarity with the Sustainable Development Goals and the international governance architecture.

Endnotes

1. Only seven evaluations provided pertained to the SP implementation period.

2. This strong demarcation of interests emerged only after the pivotal CHOGM in Sir Lanka, which revealed the tensions.

3. Presumably this is related to the fact that the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) is a separate fund.

4. With the caveat that it was challenging for this evaluation to ascertain the differences in how the Secretariat is working now, compared to before the current SP and RBM system was introduced. This is due to the limited institutional memory, which is in turn a result of the high turnover of staff, as well as the limited understanding of the full portfolio of programming, since most staff and consultants focus uniquely on a single project.

5. Most of the current IOs require an ex-post or ex-ante evaluations, which are costly and not possible for every project.

6. According to the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) (2010), Results-Based Management Handbook.

7. Such as Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform of Action and African Union Protocols on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.

8. This was recently reduced from 53 to 52, given the withdrawal of Maldives from the Commonwealth.

9. For example, YTH, which undertook a radical restructure that was directly aligned with budgets and strategic aims.

10. Eighty-one (81) staff members left, according to records from the Human Resource Division (HRD).

11. While 'naïve' was not defined in this context, the evaluators interpret this to mean simplified, quantified efficiency assessments and unsubstantiated claims of relative cost-effectiveness, rather than a more in-depth cost-benefit analysis and a full understanding of how results achieved link to the resources invested in them.

12. It involved the review of 30 evaluation reports across an 11-year period (2005–2016). The findings here come from the preliminary results report.

13. The RBM team's records indicate that 179 people were trained from 2012 to 2015.

14. This is the second highest rating on a scale of 1 to 4, where: 1-no assurance; 2-limited assurance; 3-substantial assurance; and 4-high assurance.

15. According to the RBM team, 137 staff members were formally trained through full-day sessions in 2015 and 2016.

16. It was incorporated into the organisational induction process in mid-2015.

17. TAU is commended for having a well-established and documented reporting process, with standardised templates which report against targets.

18. The target for the number of countries achieving the indicators for 2017 are just two and four – lower than all other targets in the SP.

19. According to Human Resource Division (HRD) records, there are currently 61 vacant posts out of a total of 266, as of 31 October 2016.

20. In the first half of 2015, YTH had a skeleton staff due to freezes on recruitment imposed after the whole YTH team was made redundant in early 2014. Only 5 of 22 positions were filled at the start of 2015, with temps filling 3 or 4 more.

21. EPG Recommendations #81, 87 and 89.

22. While this may be a change of mandate, it reflects the view of respondents consulted.

23. Six of which contribute to IOs, one of which aligns with an Enabling Outcome, and one of which represents an Internal Outcome.

24. Conducted by PFMConnect, Ltd.

25. Conducted by Public Administration International (PAI).

26. The Secretariat helps create the ToRs, provides consultants and monitors them. If TA is needed for more than six months, the Gender Section monitors them jointly with TAU in collaboration with the ministers.

27. SP Monitoring Report 2015–16.

28. Brought by Mr Wavel Ramkalawan of Seychelles National Party challenging the victory in the December 2015 presidential election of James Michel, won by a majority of 193 votes.

29. Morgan, P (2002), 'Technical assistance: correcting the precedents', UNDP Development Policy Journal, Volume 2, December 2002

30. Cited in Impact Assessment Report – The Bahamas, April 2015.

31. Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

32. TAU is commended for having a well-established and documented reporting process with standardised templates which report against targets

33. However, it must be noted that the evaluators were not able to validate this point sufficiently due to lack of access – see limitations Section 2.2

34. Sept. 2012 – Sept. 2014

35. In partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which was charged with the logistical operational aspects of the referendum in collaboration with Vanuatu's Electoral Office.

36. Recommendations directed to Heads of Governments have been removed, so that this table only contains the recommendations for the SG/Commonwealth Secretariat.

The Commonwealth

P15146

Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2013/14 – 2016/17

Management Response

The Commonwealth

Evaluation title	Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan, 2013/14 – 2016/17
Evaluation Published	January 2017
Management response prepared by	Strategy, Portfolio, Partnerships and Digital Division
Management response approved by	Senior Management Committee

Overall comments

Given the subject and timing of the evaluation, the large share of recommendations are strategic and apply to the framing of the Secretariat's strategic planning process, governance and planning. As a result, action on a number of recommendations would not proceed into full effect until the new strategic plan is developed in the financial year 2020/2021.

Of the 39 evaluation recommendations provided, 27 have been agreed to or partially agreed to. Agreement on 8 recommendations has been deferred pending the outcome of the other on-going reviews. Only 4 recommendations were not accepted.

The mid-term review of the Strategic Plan 2017/18 - 2020/21 will assess the implementation of planned actions for the 27 recommendations agreed to and the extent to which this has contributed to improved performance against the strategic and delivery plan.

Recommendation 1

Look strategically at the geo-political interests of MCs in future consultation rounds, including communities such as BRICS and SADC. Take into account feedback from PCPs, technical staff, ministries, partners/contributors and CWOs; and actively plan for management of MC expectations within future consultation processes.

Management Response	AGREED
	The strategic planning process of the Secretariat recognises the need for broad consultations and global scans to ensure that the Strategic Plan is relevant to the global agendas Members States have affirmed.

Recommendation 2

Make financial forecasting and budgeting an integral part of the process of developing the new SP, taking place at the same time the Outcomes are defined and involving a common team. Develop an accompanying Operational/Delivery plan, in order that funding allocation be used as a key criterion for determining project priorities and staffing levels.

Management Response	AGREED
	The Secretariat's Strategic Plan is a high level document that is operationalised through a comprehensive Delivery Plan, developed and implemented annually.

Recommendation 3

Given budget constraints, there should be a 'real' reduction in the number of work areas – or else the scope of each IO should be reduced. If resources remain the same or decline in the next SP period, it should be reflected by an actual decline in the number of work areas in the Delivery plan.

Management Response	DEFFERED
	There is an ongoing high level review of the Secretariat's governance arrangements and Heads of States have agreed to work towards putting the Secretariat on a more sustainable financing path. Decisions on the Secretariat's financing and strategic priorities are made by Member states.

Recommendation 4

Focus efforts on determining the organisation's technical/programming priorities in the next four years (and beyond), in order to maximise impact while optimising limited resources. Target future programming on areas of comparative advantages and UVP – such as small states, democracy and governance, policy and legal reform, judiciary/rule of law, and human rights. Revise the SOs to be more focused and to represent changes to which the Secretariat can feasibly contribute as well as observe changes and report them during the SP period.

Management Response	DEFFERED
	See comment on Recommendation 3 above. Review of the Strategic Outcomes will be undertaken in the strategic planning process for Strategic Plan 20/21

Recommendation 5

Ensure that the SRF clearly articulates the various levels of change that the Secretariat can realistically bring about; and that Strategic Outcomes (impact) proposed are sufficiently attributable to the Secretariat's work. The SDGs and priorities of the Charter then represent the super-goal or ultimate impact of the Secretariat's work – even at a higher level than SOs.

Management Response	PARTIALLY AGREED
	Intermediate Outcomes reflect the highest level of change in member states expected within the life of projects. The SRF and Strategic Outcomes will be reviewed again in 2021 to reflect better reflect the SDGs that hey support

Recommendation 6

Revise the term used to describe the impact-level results (SOs), in order to more clearly distinguish the desired impact from the intended outcomes, e.g., they could be called "Goals" to avoid the impression that they refer to the same level of result as the IOs. Likewise, correctly label groups of various projects as "programmes", and develop corresponding 'programme' KPIs.

Management Response	NOT ACCEPTED
	The Secretariat's organisational framework for results and their definitions have been reviewed and updated in March 2017 and are communicated and applied consistently. Intermediate Outcomes reflect the highest level of change in member states expected within the life of projects. The SRF and Strategic Outcomes will be reviewed again in 2021 to better reflect the SDGs that they support.

Recommendation 7

Ensure that all projects/initiatives fit within the SP and can be reported against it going forward. Discourage approval of MC requests that do not align with the agreed priorities.

Management Response	AGREED
	Project development and guidance stress the requirement that new initiatives be within strategic plan and this is apprised before projects are approved. Initiative that fall outside the strategic plan but are responsive to a CHOGM mandate are also justifiable included in the portfolio of projects.

Recommendation 8

Ensure that IOs are consistent in their size and scope, across the various pillars, by eliminating some and consolidating others. Formulate new IOs which better articulate the Secretariat's USP and comparative advantages, and provide measurable medium-term results against which to track and report results using routine monitoring and periodic review. New IOs could focus on the immediate results from the main products and services that the Secretariat offers, relevant to multiple SOs – i.e., policy reform, legislative drafting/legal frameworks, trade agreements, election observation, needs assessments, advocacy work, the Secretarial role of convening important large meetings, establishment of knowledge hubs or funds (for climate financing), etc.

Management Response	NOT ACCEPTED
	The process of generation of IO is subject to consultations with member states – the Secretariat consolidates and standardises the language and ensures that the levels of changes expected are aligned with the organisation's results frameworks. Member states however determine the number of IOs and the nature of these – what he Secretariat should be working on over the upcoming strategic period.

Recommendation 9a

Make 'Gender' an Enabling Outcome, in order to more effectively mainstream it.

Management Response	AGREED
	Gender to made an enabling outcome in the 2017/18 – 2021/22 Strategic Plan.

Recommendation 9b

Retain TA as cross-cutting theme, yet consider highlighting partnerships separately.

Management Response	AGREED
	Technical assistance model of delivery mainstreamed across all programmes to ensure that the expertise are contributing directly to the strategic plan results.

Recommendation 9c

Harmonise divisional projects/PDDs for advocacy into one global advocacy strategy, with corresponding sub-projects, under which reporting on MMs may be captured.

Management Response	DEFFERED
	The Secretariat will review proposals and recommendations to develop a global advocacy strategy.

Recommendation 9d

Showcase more explicitly the convening work that is a major aspect of the Secretariat's mandate; and make visible the important consensus-building role of the Secretariat by including it as an Enabling Outcome in the new SP.

Management Response	AGREED
	All consensus building projects have been brought together into the enabling outcome – Consensus building.

Recommendation 9e

Develop a Knowledge Management Framework and system to consolidate and strengthen this important area and clarify accountabilities and budget. Consider broadening the portfolio to encompass evaluation and learning, which are critical elements of RBM.

Management Response	AGREED
	The Secretariat will develop a knowledge management strategy that will also guide systems development. The Secretariat will also proactively address learning within the RBM approach.

Recommendation 9f

Emphasise 'Innovation' as another important cross-cutting theme.

Management Response	AGREED
	An approach to innovations that is cross-cutting will be developed with a fully-fledged innovations programme

Recommendation 10a

Refine the category of Financial and Non-Financial Corporate Services, which encompasses a wide range of different types of services, to facilitate corporate service reporting to the SP.

Management Response	AGREED
	Corporate services to be reflected in planning and reporting based on the Corporate Service operational plan.

Recommendation 10b: Ensure greater prominence to Communication and Visibility in the next SP.

Management Response	AGREED
	The Secretariat has significantly increased its social media presence and visibility, particularly following the CHOGM 2018.

Recommendation 10c	
Quality and Results might be more appropriate as an Enabling Outcome, given the important link of RBM, Planning, and ME&R with Knowledge Management.	
Management Response	**NOT ACCEPTED** Quality and Results retained under internal outcomes.

Recommendation 11	
Look to combine multiple MC requests into a single response, such as regional training in response to several capacity development requests from various countries. This would not necessarily entail limiting the requests, but having a different approach to the Request Register.	
Management Response	**DEFFERED** Regional responses are considered for particular programmes such as capacity building. This is at the discretion of individual programme directorates as appropriate to the programme. Findings from evaluations towards the end of the strategic plan will inform the response to this recommendation.

Recommendation 12	
Prioritise SDG targets where the Secretariat can make the most difference and where other organisations are not already working, including the interface between different SDGs. In addition to aligning with the goals/targets of global results frameworks, the Secretariat may look to ensure that its work adheres to the principles and commitments agreed as part of the global agenda; and review how the various projects/programmes align with MCs' National Development Plans.	
Management Response	**PARTIALLY AGREED** The Secretariat identifies priorities of member states in the context of a strategic Plan and CHOGM Mandates. However, the Secretariat is developing its understanding of how to align its programming with the global 2030 agenda and better support countries with their SDG priorities.

Recommendation 13	
Ensure strong leadership and executive decision-making for prioritisation of delivery areas and staffing decisions within the Secretariat; and conduct a short, sharp restructuring process. Allow each department to provide input and suggestions on the revised organigram, but retain final decisions for the person/team charged with coordinating the SP design and budgeting processes.	
Management Response	**AGREED** A number of senior positions have not been permanently filled for some time and are now subject to recruitment.

Recommendation 14

Put in place an incentives system to encourage interdisciplinary working and break down some of the organisational silos that persist, e.g., within Performance Management Plans. Introduce improved mechanisms for sharing budgets, implement regular cross-divisional SMG meetings, and seize opportunities for integration and synergies between similar areas, such as Youth and Social Development (Education/Health/Gender) and Economic Growth/Trade and Small States' Resilience.

Management Response	AGREED
	The Secretariat's reform programme to address the issues of silos and collaboration across the organisation. The role of SMG in programme coordination to be strengthened.

Recommendation 15

Conduct a thorough review of all projects in country at the outset of all future Secretariat engagement with MCs, with an eye to opportunities for collaborative coordination, in order to enhance the effectiveness of assistance and maximise its impact.

Pilot joint project monitoring by Advisers to minimise project operational costs, increase efficiency and improve regular communications, e.g., nominate one division to act as 'country representative' for a MC.

Consider a mechanism of Country Strategies for either all MCs or those identified as priority countries during the next SP period.

Management Response	AGREED
	Country level information for all Member States is key in delivering programmes that address Member State needs. PMIS will be updated with the option to track country information. Since progress and impact can more effectively be tracked at the national level, country level assessment or measurement mechanism will be put in place that documents holistic progress at a country level to be used as a basis for planning.
	The Secretariat will consider the option for country strategies as recommended.

Recommendation 16

Build on investment in the online course on RBM and gender mainstreaming for staff, by examining other effective approaches to continuous professional development that represent good VfM.

An expanded e-learning package combined with a strong new-staff induction package and periodic in-house F2F trainings/refreshers will likely be needed on an on-going basis to keep staff up-to-date on evolving RBM trends and enhanced organisational tools and processes.

Make RBM training (including PMIS orientation) mandatory for technical and corporate staff, and not just at the discretion of each Director/Head.

Management Response	AGREED
	The Secretariat will establish a common online platform to consolidate e-course offerings. The Secretariat will also develop an overall learning strategy for the organisation.

Recommendation 17

Conduct a formal review of PMIS in collaboration with users, and develop a plan to improve the capacity of the system to serve staff needs. Commission a working group of Project Managers and Operations Officers to inform the development of the plan. Make the interface more user-friendly by eliminating the need for manual reconciliation of financial information, reducing the number of levels/windows, and making page/tab headings more self-explanatory. Limit ME&R requirements to the most essential and meaningful quantitative and qualitative data collection. Extend PMIS systemic capacity to enable country-level disaggregation.

Management Response	AGREED
	The Secretariat will conduct a formal review it Programme Management Information System and will implement user-led systems improvements.

Recommendation 18

The organisation must have a system that responds to corporate demands for strategic, high-level information while at the same time providing more detailed information that supports operations and delivery. Mandatory data requirements on SOs and OI can exist alongside optional tools for lower levels.

Introduce complementary tools and processes for lower-level planning, management and monitoring to address the recurring problem with underspend and the Secretariat's financial management weaknesses perceived by the EU and perhaps other partners.

Management Response	AGREED
	The Secretariat is in the process of implementing a Commonwealth Data Platform and Ms Office 365 that will address the key system challenges. The Secretariat will also create a mechanism to share monitoring and delivery information with Management.

Recommendation 19

Enhance TAU reporting templates to allow for qualitative description, reporting on unintended outcomes or work beyond their TOR; and to explain numbers, tell success stories, and share descriptive lessons.

Management Response	NOT ACCEPTED
	Technical Assistance Unit has been disbanded and technical assistance projects are now under the management of relevant programme areas.

Recommendation 20

Allocate formal responsibility for the QA function within the organisation, which incorporates QA of quality project design, context analysis and gender mainstreaming.

Management Response	AGREED
	The Secretariat recognises the importance of Quality Assurance. Quality assurance is primarily the role of Strategy, Portfolio and Partnership Division and therefore this role will clearly defined and allocated.

Recommendation 21

Prioritise organisational learning through strengthened linkages between evaluation and planning, monitoring and reporting. Introduce a policy/strategy and mechanism for organisational learning and commit adequate resources to evaluation, especially ex-post impact evaluation.

Pilot 'evaluative monitoring' via periodic results-informed reviews at programme/project level and divisional level, including for MMs. Good practices, such as the Peer Review of PDDs and Quarterly Performance Scans by divisions, should be institutionalised so that all teams are systematically applying them.

Management Response	AGREED
	In response to this recommendation, the Secretariat will develop a monitoring, evaluation and learning approach and policy for the organisation. In addition, regular performance reviews will be initiated and an overall approach to organisational learning developed.

Recommendation 22

Redouble efforts to operationalise gender mainstreaming within the organisation, supported by a clear practical operational plan to guide implementation and embed gender in programming in practice. Strengthen systems for ME&R and organisational learning on gender, and roll-out mandatory basic gender training.

Management Response	AGREED
	The Secretariat prioritise gender mainstreaming, and to this effect, a dedicated staff will be appointment at Advisory level to lead the mainstreaming agenda. The Secretariat will conduct another gender audit to assess progress on mainstreaming and based on the finding develop a comprehensive capacity building programme for gender mainstreaming. Reporting on gender mainstreaming will be strengthened in quarterly reviews and organisational reporting.

Recommendation 23

Emphasise gender as an enabling outcome in the SP, including both gender-specific indicators (for gender-focused projects) and integrated, gender-related indicators (for gender-mainstreaming across sectoral projects) in the SRF associated with the new SP.

Management Response	AGREED
	In light of this recommendation and the Secretariat's own lessons during this period, gender mainstreaming will be moved from intermediate outcomes to enabling outcomes. The Secretariat will also develop priority gender mainstreaming indicators that all programmes will contribute, supported by training programmes.

Recommendation 24

Recruit advisory-level staff with both RBM and Gender skills on the Gender team, in order to serve as an interface between gender and divisions and to play a QA role.

Management Response	AGREED
	The Secretariat recognises the importance of gender mainstreaming and need for higher level capacity to lead the engagements. A dedicated advisory-level staff to deliver as recommended will be recruited. In addition, Gender and RBM Team will coordinate mainstreaming and capacity building within the organisation.

Recommendation 25

Make concerted efforts to meet the requirements of the EU's "7 Pillars Assessment," which is a good governance/management audit required for accessing additional types of funding. Many of the EU-funded Hubs and Spokes Programme's beneficiaries – such as the Secretariats of COMESA, SADC and CARICOM – have graduated from the "7 Pillars Assessment", suggesting that the channelling of financial support through the Secretariat is becoming less necessary.

Management Response	DEFFERED
	Implementation of this recommendation is under consideration. EBR policy is under development and a new DSG and Senior Director will be accountable for decision-making on this recommendation.

Recommendation 26

Acquire an enterprise-wide application to bring together HR, finance, procurement as well as ME&R data.

In particular, it is recommended that integration of PMIS and the financial system be prioritised as well as the streamlining of reports from HR, IT and finance, in order to reduce the amount of manual reconciliation in PMIS and duplicative efforts in tracking and reporting information across the organisation. One option for consideration is to replace CODA with an ERP system and new streamlined processes to match.

Management Response	PARTIALLY AGREED
	Management rejected option to acquire enterprise wide application in favour of upgrading and better integrating current systems.

Recommendation 27

Establish a process for regular tracking and documentation of the status of recommendations, such as KPMG Audits, EPG recommendations and evaluation studies.

Management Response	AGREED
	The Secretariat acknowledges the importance of tracking and reporting on implementation of evaluation recommendations. An evaluation recommendation tracking mechanism will be developed and implemented. Audit recommendations are already tracked and reported upon.

Recommendation 28

Define the 'satisfactory' spending rate for each quarter, in order to strengthen the interpretation of burn rates and/or thresholds for performance as well as establish a system for flagging consistent underspending.

Management Response	PARTIALLY AGREED
	The Secretariat does not define a 'satisfactory' spending rate, but tracks the size of underspends against monthly expenditure projections.

Recommendation 29

Develop and implement a communications strategy for the dissemination of the new SP, which aims to inform all MCs, staff, CWOs, potential donors and other partners of the Secretariat's strategic priorities, strategies, and specific role/mandate (while emphasising its USP and comparative advantages as well as reinforcing the "Commonwealth brand").

Strengthen the work under the SP component of "Increased understanding of SP among MCs and partners facilitated". Facilitate close collaboration between the Communications (COMs) and SPED teams as well as greater integration between the quantitative data/numbers with the qualitative information/stories.

Management Response	DEFFERED
	This was not implemented in the context of the Strategic Plan 2017/2018-2020/2021, however COM and SPPD are collaborating more closely on the communication of results in Annual Results Report and a communication plan will be scoped for the next SP.

Recommendation 30

Ensure that MCs' requests are managed in a consistent manner, with regular communication to the PCPs.

Management Response	DEFFERED
	Member states requests are managed at programme level. Secretariat communicates directly through High Commissions rather than PCPs.

Recommendation 31

Finalise the corporate-wide Partnership Strategy and fast-track its implementation, including a large component on Strategic Communications and Visibility.

Introduce a centralised database of key contacts (i.e., PCPs, contributing partner focal points, LTEs, etc.), develop protocols for its active updating, and assign responsibilities for relationship management to specific staff members.

Management Response	PARTIALLY AGREED
	PCPs no longer primary channel. Secretariat communicates directly through High Commissions rather than PCPs.

Recommendation 32

Review the approach that all joint working must be channelled through the dedicated Focal Point of the Secretariat Liaison Manager/Partnerships Officer, in order not to stifle collaboration and limit relationship building between technical counterparts in respective organisations.

Management Response	DEFFERED
	The Secretariat is considering options to improve coordination and coherence.

Recommendation 33

Operationalise the EPG vision of strengthened collaboration, coordination and joint planning among CWOs.

The Secretariat should convene significant Commonwealth family members on a regular basis to discuss mandates, strengths, activities and mutual work plans; and institute consultative meetings with CWOs at different levels including SG and technical levels.

Collaboration could include special task forces; working groups on specific issues; and forums prior to each CHOGM looking at how to synthesise learning and influence the CHOGM agenda.

Management Response	AGREED
	The Secretariat will develop and implement a partnership strategy that facilities dialogue between the Secretariat and Commonwealth Organisations.

Recommendation 34

Conduct an organisational SWOT analysis to identify areas of strength and comparative advantage, and locate this within mapping of other CWOs and key stakeholders, to determine their mandates, comparative advantages and programming priorities.

This would provide important information on which organisations might be best placed to deliver on-the-ground programmes and would enable the identification of potential partnerships that could be leveraged to achieve greater impact.

Based on the findings of this mapping exercise Secretariat staff should be encouraged to see CWOs as delivery partners, be aware of their mandates, and be wary to duplicate or trespass on these.

Management Response	AGREED
	This exercise was conducted in the process of preparing the Partnership strategy

Recommendation 35

Establish a working group to look at the dichotomy of Democracy/Political work versus Development work in the house, and develop an action plan and working group to promote synergies, opportunities, and mutual inter-relations between the two pillars, e.g., evaluation or research, promote and publicise cross-pillar initiatives, development of counterpart system, etc.

Management Response	AGREED
	The Secretariat will address these issues as part of the overall reform agenda of the organisation.

Recommendation 36

Increase efforts to capture and document higher-order results (outcomes and impact) of projects/programmes. This will require going beyond six-monthly and annual reporting by LTEs and consulting, and utilising evaluative monitoring, reviews, and ex-ante evaluation.

Management Response	AGREED
	Programme level monitoring will be instituted in addition to project monitoring to capture higher-level results. The Secretariat will strengthen its continuous evaluation and adaptive planning.

Recommendation 37

Instil proactive approaches to gender mainstreaming. Rather than awaiting MCs' requests for gender-specific support, the Secretariat should integrate gender into other projects, including the ToRs of LTEs

Management Response	AGREED
	Gender mainstreaming, guided by the Gender Policy will be implemented, and key areas will include integration of gender mainstreaming into planning and recruitment.

Recommendation 38

Ensure that sustainability is built into Secretariat work at all levels – i.e., in the SP regarding high-level organisational approaches, at departmental level regarding long-term programmes, and at project level regarding PDDs.

To increase the chance of sustained benefits and expand the impact of the Secretariat's work, it is critical that every assignment be examined with a 'sustainability lens' and that actions to promote sustainable inputs/results be built into the project design or expert's TORs.

QA and reporting should explicitly address sustainability as a key criterion/dimension.

A corporate-wide Sustainability Strategy and/or CS Strategy would add value.

Management Response	AGREED
	Sustainability is part of project design, project appraisal process ensures clear indication of sustainability. This is already part of evaluation. Evidence for sustainability needs to be a key component in programme monitoring, a process to be strengthened.

Recommendation 39

The Secretariat should give careful consideration to addressing the common issue of short-term commitment horizons (e.g., interventions conducted solely through a contract with a LTE, support limited to a 4-year project), which are a real obstacle for more strategic thinking, longer-term planning, and ongoing partnerships. This may involve a shift toward sub-regional and regional models for collaboration and delivery, as a way to expand reach and increase impact while finding cost-efficiencies.

Management Response	PARTIALLY AGREED
	Regional models for implementations are being explored within some programmes.
	There is an ongoing high level review of the Secretariat's governance arrangements and Heads of States have agreed to work towards putting the Secretariat on a more sustainable financing path. Decisions on the Secretariat's financing and strategic priorities are made by Member states.

The Commonwealth